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HONOR BLAKE.

VOL. II.

A



HONOR BLAKE

THE STORY OF A PLAIN WOMAN

BY

MRS. R. H. KEATINGE

AUTHOR OF 'ENGLISH HOMES IN INDIA.'



VOLUME II.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
A HAPPY WINTER,	.	1
CHAPTER II.		
FIRST LOVE,	.	30
CHAPTER III.		
'VOUS AVEZ PERDU LES INDES,'	.	57
CHAPTER IV.		
TOO MUCH LOVE,	.	78
CHAPTER V.		
FALSE,	.	85
CHAPTER VI.		
HONOR TELLS THE WHOLE TRUTH,	.	112
CHAPTER VII.		
THE TRUANT'S RETURN,	.	148
CHAPTER VIII.		
HONOR LOSES HER FRIENDS,	.	175

CHAPTER IX.	
HONOR'S TROUBLES INCREASE,	PAGE 189
CHAPTER X.	
GLEAMS OF SUNSHINE,	208
CHAPTER XI.	
'POOR SPENCER BERTRAM,'	237
CHAPTER XII.	
TRY AGAIN,	256
CHAPTER XIII.	
ALONE,	277
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE HAVEN,	294



HONOR BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

A HAPPY WINTER.

HONOR did not forget the conclusion of Lady Tracy's letter. The house on the opposite side of the garden, that where the Bertrams had formerly lived, seemed suitable; and after some little correspondence Lady Tracy engaged it, and Honor busied herself with extreme pleasure in arranging the details, so that her old friend should be comfortable.

Conny joined with very good-will in this task. The advent of a 'Miladi,' their cousin, gave no little *éclat* to the Blakes in the small world of Bayonne, and quite counterbalanced any invidious remarks which might have been made upon their intimacy with Miss Bertram.

Conny was by no means indifferent to the advantages she might reap from Lady Tracy's visit—very anxious to conciliate her, and even, if we must tell all the truth, not without speculations as to the possible effect of her own charms on Mr. Tracy's mind.

She worried Honor with continual questions about that young man's profession, prospects, and supposed income; questions of which Honor could not in the least understand the motive (she never did understand Conny), and could not at all answer.

It was late in October when Lady Tracy arrived at Bayonne. Her son accompanied her, but only to stay there a week. He came again however for a long Christmas holiday, and that was a charming time for them all.

Hospitable Bayonne society had received Lady Tracy with open arms. Her manners and conversation made her very popular, and the popularity rose to furore when she celebrated the Christmas season by all sorts of little entertainments 'à l'Anglais,' a Christmas-tree party and charades, besides dances.

The Bayonne season began a full month

earlier than its wont, stimulated by her example, and the desire to secure so charming a cavalier as Monsieur Tracy for the balls, where cavaliers were something scarce, and often the reverse of charming.

Honor told Lady Tracy frankly she never went to balls, and underwent a strict cross-examination as to her reasons.

‘*Really and truly*, then, it is not M. Voisin, nor yet Père—whatever your friend Sister Justine’s oracle is called?’

‘No; really and truly not. I will tell you the whole story;’ and Honor related the history of her first ball.

‘Very well,’ replied Lady Tracy; ‘that is not difficult to understand. I am not prepared to advise any young lady to spend her whole available capital on a ball-dress, still less to go to a ball when she cannot dance.’

No more was said at the moment, but two days afterward Lady Tracy begged Honor to accompany her alone to Bayonne, and there, entering a house in the Place, and ascending to the first floor, she asked for ‘Madame Duvier.’

‘I have brought you a pupil, Madame,’ she said. ‘Have the shoes I ordered come?’

Madame Duvier indicated a heap of dancing-shoes on a side-table.

‘Try on a pair, my dear,’ continued Lady Tracy to Honor, ‘and take your lesson. Be a good girl, and do your best. I will call for you in an hour;’ and she left the room.

These lessons were repeated every day for a fortnight (it was Honor’s holiday-time), and then Madame Duvier pronounced her pupil capable of appearing creditably in any ball-room.

‘That is all you want, my dear,’ said the kind old cousin. ‘You do not desire to be a Vestris, and if you did, I don’t fancy *you* will ever dance into anybody’s heart, so it is as well you don’t, is it not?’

Then Mrs. Robertson, formerly Isabel Wedderburn, now temporarily sojourning in Paris, by her aunt’s desire chose and sent down to Bayonne two very dainty ball-dresses; not at all alike, but each suiting perfectly each intended wearer. Conny, in azure clouds sprinkled with silver, was more fairy-like than ever, while Honor looked her very best in a more

sober costume of black and white, with white moss-roses binding the hair, which had begun, as red hair will, to shade toward auburn of late years.

So appparelled, the two Miss Blakes went with Lady Tracy to a ball at the Sous-Préfecture; and Honor, to her own surprise, enjoyed herself exceedingly. She danced much during the evening, it is true, with her cousin Tom Tracy; but she also found several agreeable French partners, among them men who, though not the very youngest of the company, could talk agreeably on other subjects than millinery and gossip, and who were as much pleased as astonished to find a 'young girl' who could understand and respond to them.

Monsieur le Souffleur was there, and passed her without recognition, but with not a pleasant glance. Honor tried to forget his presence.

One day soon after she came in nearer contact with this gentleman. Lady Tracy had gone into the office of the firm of which he was an attaché to draw a cheque on her London bankers, and when on her way home she missed her cheque-book. Charlie volunteered to run back to the bank to look for it, while Honor

and Lady Tracy retraced their steps more slowly.

Before Charlie reached the bank, M. le Souffleur had found the cheque-book, and started with it to restore it to the owner.

Charlie missed him by taking a short cut, and the gentleman came upon the two ladies in the Rue Porte St. Martin, and, with an elaborate bow, handed Lady Tracy her book.

Honor was forced to bow. She did so, reddening awkwardly, and M. le Souffleur took his leave.

Lady Tracy seemed about to ask the reason of her embarrassment, when Charlie came up and changed the conversation by telling how he had run into the post-office to ask for letters, and there were two from India for Lady Tracy, which the postmaster declined trusting to so young a messenger.

'I will go for them, aunt,' said Honor. Lady Tracy liked this title from her young cousins.

When Honor returned with the letters Monsieur le Souffleur was forgotten.

Lady Tracy remembered few other subjects on the days when she received her Indian letters.

Most part of her own life had been spent in India ; it was the birthplace alike of her dearest friendships and of her children, and now the homes of her two daughters and their children lay there.

‘ It is a sort of family fate,’ said Tom Tracy one day to Honor. ‘ I often wonder how I have never found my way out there also. When once the destiny gets into a household, it seems as if every member must go in his or her turn. My sister Annie married a man in the Company’s service, so of course we knew she would go to India ; but Georgy’s husband is a clergyman. He had a country parsonage in Leicestershire when they were married, but not two years after their marriage he got ill, and the doctors said he must not spend another winter in England. A friend of my mother’s offered him an Indian chaplaincy, and though my mother was not in love with the idea, he would go. He is a fine fellow—one of a sort sadly needed out there : works with a will, and does a lot of good ; but it was hard on my mother to send both her girls so far away.’

‘ Have you no other sisters ?’

‘None living ; my mother had eight children, but only we three are left.’

Honor’s eyes filled sympathetically.

‘I had no idea she had had so much trouble.’

‘No ? I fancy few people have had more. Then she is so unselfish, so sympathetic. She is not a person to let her own troubles break her down.’

‘Did they die very young ?’

‘Some of them. One sister, the only girl besides Annie and Georgy, died before I was born,—a child in England, while my father and mother were in India. I believe my mother felt that more than anything else, except perhaps Edward’s death. Two others died, mere infants, in India, and another of my brothers was drowned bathing, while he and I were boys together at Eton.’

‘Was that Edward ?’

‘No ; that was a great blow to my mother, but Edward’s death was worse. He was the eldest son, and—the family destiny—went to India in the Civil Service. He was very clever, and distinguished himself greatly. You know how much my mother cares for Indian politics,

how she identifies herself with the public men there whom she esteems, and exults in their heroism.

‘She used to be my father’s right hand and secretary for many years, and caught the enthusiasm from him, I suppose.

‘Poor Edward possessed all the qualities she most idolizes. It was not only *she* who thought it,—men whose opinion is well worth having, held his death a national loss.

‘He was sent home after a severe illness, caused by over-work, and died on the voyage. My mother has worn black ever since, and though she does not show it now, she has never forgotten him for an hour, I believe. It was partly this I think drew her to you all at first. She sympathized so much with your loss in your poor brother Richard.’

‘What a sad place India seems!’ said Honor, with tears in her eyes.

‘Is it not? I often think so. There is so much separation, so many sudden deaths there, it is a very sad country to have anything to do with. I shall be glad to see Annie and Georgy and the young ones home next spring.’

Lady Tracy often talked to Honor of India, and after a time she began to know many of the men of whom the old lady told her, almost as well as if she had seen them.

A book of photographs, one of Lady Tracy's great treasures, used to help her here.

There was hardly one man there who had not done good public service, which Lady Tracy remembered faithfully, whether his name had come forward for distinction or not.

Many there had already won high honours, and there were others whose laurel crowns were to bud forth before that year was old,—too often mixed with cypress.

'Who are those ?' asked Honor as she turned to the page where opposite a soldierly-looking man with slightly grey hair, was the portrait of a very sweet beautiful woman.

'I like that lady's face ; she seems as if she had *a story* about her.'

'I do not know her, my dear, nor much about her, save that she is the wife of a man whose choice could have fallen on none but a good woman, so I am sure her looks are her least charm.'

‘That is Sir Ralph Everard, a man whom I hold only second to one or two others in India. He has been a very dear friend of mine for many years. I once thought to hold him in a closer tie, but Georgy preferred an English parsonage to India then; and though she has gone to India since, I have no cause to find fault with her choice. *He* married last year this beautiful girl, of no particular family or connexions, but I have heard she is very good and charming, and I can well believe it.’

Mr. Tracy was a very pleasant companion to his cousins. He used to escort them on long walks and drives, which the clear bright weather, though the season was mid-winter, liberally allowed; it was he who organized the charades, and, with the assistance of Charlie and Jean Detrop, transplanted the Christmas tree, and then did all the hard work of the decoration. He seemed to be never tired of providing everybody with amusement, while his gentle courtesies and little acts of consideration won Mrs. Blake’s and Newton’s hearts as effectually as his practical sympathy with Charlie’s love of

adventure did that of the young would-be sailor.

But in spite of all this, and of his frank undisguised admiration for Miss Conny's beauty, he showed not the least symptom of falling in love with that young lady.

She was too clever not to see when a case of the sort was hopeless, and after several attempts she made up her mind that this was so.

'I believe he is an idiot,' she said to herself spitefully one day; 'he looks on me exactly as he might do on his grandmother.'

The occasion in question was when Constance had appealed to Mr. Tracy coquettishly about a new fashion of arranging the hair, and in reply he had stated his opinion, ending with 'for a very handsome face like yours,'—'just as if he were talking of a statuette or a kitten,' mused Conny, 'not half so warmly as he talks about pictures or scenery with Honor; I believe he is a fool!'

Mr. Tracy was *not* a fool. He thought Conny very pretty, quite as pretty as even she could wish him to think her, but then we must remember that, living in London, he was accus-

tomed to see a number of pretty women continually, and something, either in his nature or his education, had given him a habit of looking below the surface. Conny showed her judgment and good sense when she early abandoned all designs on his heart. She was disappointed and mortified, and was perhaps the only one of the family not sincerely sorry when, at the conclusion of his holidays, he returned to England.

When this took place Lady Tracy begged Honor to live with her altogether while she remained at Anglet. Honor, with her mother's approval, consented, on condition that Emmy should accompany her. She did not give up her tuitions, nor did Lady Tracy ask her to do so; but the evenings and other hours of the day when she was at home were spent very delightfully in her dear old friend's company.

Emmy was a great favourite with Lady Tracy, and filled her sister's place in her absence. The old lady did not care so much for Conny's society as for that of her sisters; but she was very kind, and bestowed on her many

tokens of friendship in the shape of new dresses and the means of procuring amusement, all of which the beauty of the family valued quite as much as Honor did those inestimable hours of loving intercourse, which were Lady Tracy's best gift to her.

When Mr. Tracy had returned to London, and Charlie to Rochelle, and when the Lenten season brought its lull of gaiety, Honor enjoyed some delightful weeks. She was never tired of listening to Lady Tracy's conversation, so full of quaint originality, sparkling wit, and the rich fruits of a lifetime full of many experiences and much thought.

Then Edith was often with them in these days—days which Honor would long look back on, as the storm-driven mariner thinks of the snug hearths and flowery gardens of the last shore he left.

It was then that Honor, for perhaps the first time in her life, put many of her own feelings into words; then that she showed her kinswoman what even Edith had never seen—her attempts at authorship: not that she concealed anything from Edith, but that she had felt them

hardly worthy of showing to any one till Lady Tracy drew them from her.

‘You must finish that story, Honor,’ said the old lady; and with keen perception and kind, wise criticism she showed the authoress wherein lay alike the faults and the beauties of her work.

‘Finish that during next summer’s holidays if you can, and let me have it. I am greatly mistaken if it does not prove a very successful book.—And what are these?’

Honor blushed, and drew forth a bundle consisting partly of columns cut from newspapers, partly of manuscript, some of it copies from other periodicals. To each of these was pinned a few pages in her own writing.

‘Do you remember,’ she said—‘I think it is in “Friends in Council”—Ellesmere wishes that congregations had the privilege of *answering* the sermons they hear. I have often thought the same about “leading articles,” and these are my answers to some.’

‘Let me read them at my leisure,’ said Lady Tracy.

Honor assented, and the old lady spent many a pleasant hour over the papers. Here and

there the girl had dwelt with the mischievous worldly-minded utilitarianism of the present day in a way that brought tears to the reader's eyes, for very wistfulness that men might ever listen to such heaven-born unselfishness as breathed from that young Crusader's words. Again she had erred—taken the foolish side of the question—misled by her own sensitive spirit; again she was dealing with one of those *jeux d'esprit* which comment so playfully on the gravest questions of our every-day life, and which so many people take for earnest; and then Lady Tracy paused and wondered—how the unlearned girl, armed with no weapon but the sword of her own pure unflinching truth, had seen and pierced the one weak place in the sophist's armour; how she had cut away and divided the just premisses from the illogical deduction that seemed, even to practised eyes, to follow it most naturally, the flaw had been so skilfully overlaid by clever words.

Lady Tracy laughed. 'I shall like to show that to —— and ——,' she said. 'They will appreciate a girl who could see through their articles.'

The winter-time was warming into spring again, and Lady Tracy had promised Isabel Robertson to spend the beginning of May with her in Paris.

‘Isabel writes that one of Mr. Robertson’s sisters is to be married before the end of May, and they have to go to Scotland for the wedding; but if Tom can come over to Paris for ten days, I shall stay there till Annie and Georgy arrive, if I can. I have told Colonel Langston he should make a point of Annie’s leaving at once.’

So spoke Lady Tracy, with a restless, anxious air that had been no stranger to her for the last few weeks, and had brought a dim foreshadowing of trouble into Honor’s sunny horizon whenever she noticed it. She knew vaguely that it was somehow connected with that troublesome Indian country of which Mr. Tracy and she had talked. She knew that Colonel Langston, who held a responsible post in Oude, had said there was some reason why he did not feel justified in asking for his furlough now, and this, she rightly believed, was enough to vex Lady Tracy, who loved her

son-in-law sincerely—all the more because his wife seemed unwilling to leave him, and inclined to put off her own visit to England.

Besides this, however, Honor fancied her old friend had some cause for anxiety of which she did not care to talk much—something referring to Indian politics; but when none of the newspapers, in which Honor carefully scanned the Indian articles, referred to any source of serious disquiet, and Lady Tracy herself did not speak at all on the subject, Honor believed she was mistaken, and that when Mrs. Langston's plans of return were decided her mother's mind would be at ease.

Honor was less constantly with Lady Tracy than before during the last fortnight of her stay, for Mrs. Blake had been ill with a severe attack of rheumatism, and her daughter's services were needed at home.

She was better now, and the doctor had said that a month or two of the Cambo waters would do her much good, also probably benefit Newton. Honor would have been charmed with the idea of being near Edith; but how could she leave her pupils? The income derived

from them was now a family necessity, so she must make some arrangement for remaining in Bayonne.

‘Even were it otherwise,’ she told Lady Tracy, ‘the only house to be had in a really good site would be too small for us all; but as I could not leave my pupils, that does not matter.’

‘It does not matter,’ replied Lady Tracy; ‘but you will have to leave your pupils all the same, Honor. I want you to come to Paris with me. When do your holidays begin? In July? Well, you must forestall them by two months. That poor little Miss Morris, who wants pupils so badly, will be thankful to take your place. You want rest, and I want you. You will finish the book, and—you will not be proud with me, child?—you will let me make good the loss to your mother? You shall repay me, if you like, when the book makes your fortune.’

Honor thanked her old friend, and assured her she was not proud.


She did indeed need rest, for in spite of this last winter having been so happy, it had, of late

at least, been fatiguing. Mrs. Blake's illness had been trying, and Charlie had been at home for the last month, owing to the sudden death of his schoolmaster's wife having for a time broken up the school. Charlie had objected to Honor's proposal of a temporary school at Bayonne, and his mother would not force the point. Honor might teach him with Emmy, she said.

It was a hard and ungracious task. Charlie was inclined to be exceedingly troublesome, and often gave Honor much anxiety by his habits and choice of companions among the wild peasantry round Anglet. Madame Beaulieu's nephew Guillaume was not at Bayonne then, nor any other of his sailor friends, and Honor feared the boy was getting into mischief from sheer idleness. She was delighted when Monsieur Gichaud wrote that he had procured a house-keeper, and his school was re-organized, and would open again on the 1st of May.

Charlie was to leave Bayonne two days after Lady Tracy.

Honor crossed the garden to her mother's house to lay kind Lady Tracy's plans before



her, and at the door she met Conny, radiant and blooming.

If Conny had of late yielded very willingly to her elder sister the trouble and responsibility of managing affairs at home, her love of power and cleverness were by no means dormant, only carried to a larger sphere, and she had made herself so useful to her friend Madame Bréguet that this leader of provincial fashion was, for the time at least, as much attached to her as was Lady Tracy to Honor.

‘You need not trouble about a room for me in the house at Cambo,’ said Conny. ‘Madame Bréguet is going to Pau next week to spend the summer, and has asked me to accompany her; only, Honor, as I shall be no expense at home all that time, I suppose you can spare me a little more money. I shall want to dress better than I do here, you know.’

‘I think I can, Conny. I will tell you by and bye,’ said Honor, and she went back to Lady Tracy, and said—

‘Dear aunt, to show how far I am from being “proud,” I am going to ask you to give me the money for the pupils, though I do not go with

you. Conny has been asked to accompany Madame Bréguet to Pau. Both of us cannot leave mamma and Newton at present, but I know what this trip will be to Conny.'

'And you—you will like Cambo as well as Paris?' and Lady Tracy took both Honor's hands, and looked straight in her face.

'I never said I should,' replied the girl, turning away her eyes, in which a mist *would* gather; 'but please, aunty, let Conny have the pleasure. I was the means of vexing her greatly some months ago; I think I did right, but I know she felt it very much; and now if you *would* help me to let her go to Pau?'

'She shall, my darling,' and the old lady kissed Honor with a warmth she seldom showed in such embraces. 'She shall go; and you shall nurse your mother at Cambo; and you must come to me as soon as Conny returns, and spend your holidays with me—remember that. Here is a cheque for the pupils; and as to-day is Thursday, let us go to Biarritz and call on Miss Morris, to see about her taking your place.'

Honor ran to put on her bonnet. While so occupied Conny came to her door.

‘ I wish you could give me the money soon, Honor. I want to get my things at once. I am to spend to-morrow with Madame Bréguet, and I shall get her to help me to choose. I do not like going into shops with her without paying ready money. I heard her say she dislikes it.’

‘ I can give you two hundred francs,’ said Honor, ‘ but I really have not got it by me now. You would not like to go into Messieurs Jarny’s and Le Souffleur’s to cash a cheque ?’

‘ Certainly not ; Madame Bréguet hates banks.’

‘ Then what can I do ? I must go to Biarritz to-day, and I shall not be back from Bayonne to-morrow till two o’clock.’

‘ That will be too late,’ said Conny. ‘ Send it by Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez, she has not gone off yet. There is Coquin at the door. She will bring it back to-night.’

‘ It is so large a sum to ask her to carry, a thousand francs.’

‘ I am sure it is quite safe,’ persisted Conny. ‘ Ask Pauline.’

Honor was herself very glad to escape the

necessity of going into the bank, so Pauline was called, and agreed with Conny: Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez was safe—safe as anything could be. She never lost one sou, and might be trusted with uncounted gold. And Pauline descanted so long on the virtues of the Basque Mercury that the young ladies saw the old woman and her donkey passing down the road toward the town.

‘La voilà partie!’ cried Pauline, ‘n’importe! I will give it to her; one thousand francs on the bureau of Monsieur Jarny, je comprends;’ and snatching up the paper she flew down-stairs and was about to run out of the door, when she heard Newton calling her.

‘Tenez!’ she cried, ‘Jean! Jean Detrop! run after your grandmother and give her this piece of paper carefully, and tell her to bring for it a thousand francs, from Monsieurs Jarny and Le Souffleur in the Arceaux! One thousand francs, don’t forget!’

Jean Detrop, who was engaged with Charlie in manufacturing some fishing-tackle, went somewhat slowly to get his hat.

‘How is it, Monsieur Charles,’ he asked, look-

ing at the cheque, 'that people will give silver for a piece of paper? One hundred! five hundred! a thousand francs! If I were Monsieur Jarny I would keep my money, not exchange it for paper!'

'I know,' said Charlie. 'My aunt told me all about it one day. You see she is very rich, and these bits of printed paper are given her in a little book by her banker, who has a lot of her money I suppose, and she writes how much she wants here—*F-o-r-t-y P-o-u-n-d-s*—that means a thousand francs, and her name "Honor Tracy" *here*, and those men in London, when they see this, pay Monsieur Jarny.'

Jean Detrop listened, duly impressed, as Charlie meant he should be, with the wealth of the English schoolboy's aunt.

'Now make haste,' urged Charlie, whittling a float. 'Run after your grandmother and come back soon. I want you to help me to finish this at once.'

Jean went, but Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez had already gone so far on her way he was a full hour overtaking her, though he ran the whole way, he averred.

Charlie declared he was very lazy, and must have walked at a very slow pace.

‘I hope I did right in giving that old woman your cheque,’ said Honor, as she and Lady Tracy drove to Biarritz.

‘I am sure there will be no mistake,’ replied Lady Tracy. ‘While you were with your mother, one day I wanted some money—not such a large sum, but half of it,—and my servant sent for it through the lady with the unpronounceable name. It came quite safely.’

The result proved the trustworthiness of Madame Quinquarionvontroyez. On Honor’s return that evening, after a satisfactory settlement about the pupils with Miss Morris, she received the thousand francs from Pauline, and gave Conny a fifth, with which some very tasteful purchases were made the next day, under Madame Bréguet’s auspices.

The last week of Lady Tracy’s stay sped away quickly. It ended in a very uncomfortable manner; and we all know what pain a little discomfort in those parting hours can give,—hours that we would fain keep as unsullied memories of love.

Lady Tracy lost the key of her desk. She valued it chiefly because to it was attached by a ring a little seal which had belonged to her husband.

The whole party had driven to Biarritz the afternoon before her departure, and walked on the sands there, and on their return sat down to tea in Mrs. Blake's house.

Lady Tracy wanted something from her own house, and Honor volunteered to fetch it. As she passed by the window of the sitting-room, which looked on the garden, she saw a light there, and Charlie standing by the table doing something with the lock in Lady Tracy's desk. Charlie's back was toward the window, but she recognised him by his English sailor hat, a present from Mr. Tracy.

She called out to him not to spoil the lock of the desk.

When she entered the room, having to pass round through the passage, all was dark, and Charlie was at the tea-table when she returned.

The next morning the key was missed. Lady Tracy said she knew it had been in her pocket when she set out for Biarritz. The

garden walk to the gate was searched in vain, so was the carriage—one always employed by the Anglet family,—and two chances, Lady Tracy said, remained. Either she had dropped the key on the Biarritz sands, where the rising tide would probably have buried or removed it ; or when on her return home she exchanged the dress she wore for her travelling dress, she might have left it in her pocket.

The dress was packed up, and it was too late to open trunks. All that could be done was to advertise a reward at Biarritz, which was done the next day, but proved unsuccessful.

Honor felt nearly sure she had seen the key in Charlie's hand, and she taxed him with it. He denied all knowledge of the affair, thereby rendering his sister very unhappy. The day of the broken mirror had not been the last of Charlie's falsehoods, but Honor never shamed him openly when she could help it.

She was uncertain whether she ought to tell Lady Tracy of this or not, but she was not sure Charlie had had the key in his hand, and she clung to the hope that it might yet be found.

Lady Tracy had sent her maid, a favourite servant, who disliked living abroad, to visit her parents that winter. The French girl who had supplied her place was so respectable as to be above suspicion, and so was her fellow-servant, an elderly cook. In the end, Lady Tracy said she believed she must have packed up the key with the dress—at any rate, as she had a duplicate at home, she would not force the lock. All this made the parting moments very hurried and uncomfortable.

When, four days later, Honor had accomplished the not easy task of transplanting her mother and Newton to Cambo, and settling them in comfort there, she felt she needed the repose of Edith's society.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST LOVE.

THE first two days after the Blakes' arrival at Cambo, were, as often happens in the late spring and early summer of those latitudes, wet and stormy. Honor was herself too busy to go out, and she rightly guessed that Edith was kept at home by the weather.

On the evening of the third day she received the following note :—

‘ DEAREST HONOR,—I should have come to see you before this, but that my throat is sore again, and papa will not let me go out, with the risk of getting wet. On Monday we were in Bayonne, where we went to meet my cousin, who has come to spend some time with us. I

saw Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez, and heard from her that you were all coming to Cambo on Wednesday morning. We meant to have gone out to Anglet that afternoon; but the rain came on, and the wetting I then got is, I think, the cause of my sore throat; however, it is nearly well now.

‘I hope your mother does not feel the damp much, and that Newton likes Cambo. Can you manage to come and dine with us to-morrow? I know you do not mind a little wet. Bring Emmy of course.—Your loving

‘EDITH.’

‘I do not see how I can leave you, mamma, for a whole afternoon,’ said Honor.

‘Nonsense!’ cried Newton good-naturedly, ‘Emmy and I will take care of mamma; you must go.’

‘Yes,’ put in Emmy; ‘you will see how useful I can be; Newton likes me to read to him very much now.’

Honor kissed the child, and thanked her. She was sorry to miss her companionship, but felt that Emmy would, in great measure, pre-

vent Mrs. Blake and Newton from feeling her absence.

The Bertrams' house was more than a mile distant, the road thereto lying along that same woodland path where she had last seen Sir Edward Wrexhill.

She always thought of him when she went along it, but to-day no sad memory seemed to have any place in her mind. The sun was shining brightly that morning, and everything fresh and glistening after the late rain.

The moss on which Honor trode was not more elastic than her own step; the voices of the birds in the trees above her, and the musical current of the little brook by her side, sounded not more joyous than the voice of youth and hope stirring in her own heart in this fair spring-time.

Wild-flowers clustered in the coppices, sweet odours filled the air, and Honor's spirit, ever in most delicate accord with outward nature, shook off all pain and care, as the woods did the rain of yesterday.

Her disappointment at not going to Paris had been amply made up for by the silent con-

sciousness of a kindness done to her sister, as well as by the hope of a later visit to dear Lady Tracy; the pain caused by Charlie's conduct had been driven from her memory by other family cares, and now these, for the time, were also in abeyance. The holiday before her too seemed very sweet; one must work hard, and constantly, to know the value of a holiday;—surely all this was enough to account for the light step and heart with which she pursued her walk. She had wondered once or twice what sort of person Edith's cousin was. She would rather have had Edith all to herself, but Honor was not naturally jealous, and Edith's cousin must be nice. 'I suppose she is unmarried,' said Honor to herself; 'I wonder if she is older or younger than Edith;' and so she passed through the wood, little dreaming that all this joyous spring of life and hope was half prophetic; little dreaming that this Cambo wood should become to her, ere many weeks were fled, what Eden was to Eve.

Edith had a little sitting-room detached from the rest of the house, which looked out on a flower-garden, and commanded from the terrace


on which it opened a splendid view of the valley. This was her favourite haunt in the summer-time, and Honor, as usual, passed through the garden and went in by the glass door from the terrace.

A gust of wind came in with her, and a voice, not Edith's, called out—

‘Oh, shut the door quickly, please!’

Honor obeyed, shutting herself inside, and not till then did she see how much the room was altered from its usual neat appearance. A litter of books and writing apparatus covered the tables, a concertina and a pile of music lay in one window, and in the other a microscope and a quantity of ferns, dried insects, and other natural specimens. In a corner, opposite the door, a sort of tent was erected, of dark blue material, studiously arranged to keep out the light, and from inside this tent the voice that had addressed Honor proceeded.

A slender finely formed hand, stained all over with ink, as it seemed to Honor, in a most untidy manner, stole out of this tent, and rearranged the drapery, which the wind had disordered, and the voice said again—



‘ Please don’t open that door again, and don’t speak to me at present ; the bath is just ready, and it will spoil all if anything goes wrong now.’

The voice was not that of a lady. It was singularly sweet and attractive, but clearly belonged to a man.

Was the cousin married? or —. Honor laughed at her own stupidity! Edith had never said her cousin was a lady! Conny would not have made that mistake.

Honor sat down, feeling very awkward and uncomfortable. Clearly she had intruded into the apartment of a stranger of the other sex, and though nothing visible about the room belied its character as a sitting-room, she could not guess what might be behind the mysterious tent.

The words of the stranger had referred to one toilet adjunct at least, and Honor was greatly tempted to run out of the room again ; but the breeze from the mountains was playing with the jasmine branches outside in a way that told how it would rush in if the door were opened, and she could not disregard those sweet accents of entreaty, and run the risk of ‘ spoiling all,’ whatever ‘ all’ might be.

‘It is some scientific experiment,’ said Honor to herself, taking courage as she looked at the microscope. So she contented herself with throwing down some books, and picking them up again rather noisily, to let the mysterious stranger know of her presence, and then sitting down with her back to the tent, she tried to fix her mind on one of the books as a means of regaining her self-composure.

It was a copy of Moore’s ‘Lalla Rookh,’ with blank leaves inserted here and there, on which some clever artist-hand had drawn illustrations, the inspiration of which Honor thought must surely have been found in intimate acquaintance with tropical scenery. The first half-dozen pictures were exquisitely finished—the rest were mere incomplete sketches. Here and there one had been brought to a point more advanced than the rest, and then left off; and the last leaves were altogether blank.

Honor was looking through this book with great interest when the inmate of the tent began to speak again :—

‘It is lovely! as lovely as your own eyes! as lovely as the valley of Cambo deserves to be

when it is the home of such beauty!' And then the voice burst forth in song—

'Oh there's not in the wide world a valley so sweet,
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet !'

Honor had not heard this melody since Peggy M'Carthy had sung it to her at Kil-daggan. She listened, bewitched, half by the old memories conjured up, half by the exquisite music of the hidden voice, poured out even in this careless chanting, sweet and deep, like the song of a blackbird.

Honor had half turned round to listen, when suddenly the tent-curtain flew back, and there appeared a young man in his shirt-sleeves, which were rolled up, holding in his hand a glass plate dripping with water, and presenting the appearance, less commonly known in those days than in these, of a 'photographic negative.' As he entered, singing

'Oh no ! it was something more exquisite still !'

Honor's eyes were arrested as her ears had been before, and chained in mute admiration. The face of the singer was perfectly beautiful, not with the beauty of Conny's favourite ball-room heroes, but like a head from some old

picture ; the straight delicate features, melancholy, thoughtful eyes, and soft brown hair, rather long, parted in the middle, pure marble forehead, and silken moustache and beard, might all have been taken as studies for the face of an angel.

The proportions of his figure revealed by his careless dress, the throat shown by his open collar, and the white arms and begrimed but beautifully fair hands that held the negative, might all equally well have served a sculptor for models.

Honor was not in the habit of admiring or appreciating 'handsome men.' That is to say, she could admire Mr. Bertram's classic features and fine grey hair, but she preferred rough Tom Tracy's honest English face to all the well-dressed dandies of the Bayonne *salons* with their irreproachable coiffures and carefully curled moustachios. *This* Adonis was very different from those, and she blushed all over and hated herself immensely when she detected her own delinquency—that for full ten seconds she had stood staring at this strange man, positively admiring him !

‘Beautiful as your eyes! Did I not tell you so?’ cried the stranger, advancing towards her, and holding out the negative on which his own eyes were fixed.

‘How very exceedingly rude!’ said Honor to herself, and she rallied her scattered faculties and tried to say something appropriate and dignified aloud. Before the words came, Adonis looked up and blushed in his turn.

‘I thought it was Edith!’ he said. ‘I really beg your pardon!’

‘I ought to beg yours for being here,’ said Honor. ‘I came in by mistake;’ and she tried to gain the door, but Adonis was between her and it.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘as you are here, and as we are not in England, will you dispense with a formal introduction and look at my photographs? I think I know who you are—Miss Blake, Edith’s great friend,—and I am Spencer Bertram, her cousin.

‘Miss Blake, allow me to present Mr. Bertram to you—Mr. Bertram, Miss Blake!’ and he bowed with mock gravity. ‘That is all correct, is it not? that is—oh dear! I forgot I have no coat! Do you mind?’

Honor laughed. She could not help it; the expressive mobile face looked into hers with such an irresistible comic air of pathetic apology.

‘Very well! I see you don’t, and Edith will be here presently. She is writing a business letter for her father, and she told me if you arrived before she came down-stairs to amuse you. Will you look at my photographs? That is the Pas de Roland, and there are the Hautes Pyrenées. I had a much finer plate, but the rain spoilt it yesterday. But this is the gem of the whole!—this one I have just been doing—the Valley of Cambo. It is as lovely as—’

Honor laughed again, she could not help it, and the melancholy eyes looked at her deprecatingly.

‘I was not going to say *that*, Miss Blake. I told you I thought you were Edith. I was going to say as lovely as any valley out of Switzerland. Not but that I might say the other,’ he pursued, after a glance at Honor, and in a low tone, as if speaking to himself.

Honor grew so red and hot she was delighted to hear Edith’s step on the terrace. Edith came in full of apologies, and, after duly admir-

ing the wonderful photograph, led Honor away to what she called 'a tidy room.' Somehow Honor thought tidy rooms very dull institutions that day. She would have liked to look at the microscopic specimens, she said to herself.

While Adonis is putting on his coat, washing his grimy hands, and otherwise making himself presentable in ladies' society, let us sketch his early history for the reader's benefit.

His mother, the wife of Mr. Bertram's brother, had been an only child and an heiress, and carried into her married home the longing of her own mother for a son. Two daughters in succession disappointed her, neither of them partaking largely of the beauty which was the dower of most of the Bertrams; and when at last this son appeared, and from his earliest infancy was not only as handsome but as clever in every way as the most partial parent could wish, his mother almost worshipped him. His father, an able physician, was so much taken up with the business of other people, he had little time to look after his own, and let his wife manage it and her children as she pleased.

Her whole being was wrapped up in the little

Spencer. She had three more daughters after his birth, but he remained the only son; and his sisters united with his mother, and indeed with every woman who approached him, in making an idol of the attractive lad. It was a wonder that they did not succeed in spoiling him more than they did.

A school, with the possible barbarity of corporal punishment, was not to be thought of for him, of course, so a private tutor was engaged at large expense, and under him the boy's talents received fair culture, and were pronounced not only remarkable, but of an order quite unequalled among others of his age.

He was very clever, with that versatile intellect which seemed to grasp everything presented to it at once, but never to follow any subject very deeply. Music came to him like an inspiration; he had a true eye for art, and a pretty knack with pencil and brush; but no perseverance to pursue that or any other study into excellence. Modern languages he learned with facility, but cared less for classics, and not at all for mathematics. When he went to the

University, his mother and sisters were quite as much surprised as disappointed that he did not distinguish himself brilliantly there. It was not without considerable coaching during his vacations from his old tutor, who, like every one that came under the boy's influence, really loved him, and more perseverance than he had ever bestowed on anything before in his life, that at last he took even a place of moderate proficiency.

It was however a great source of pride and pleasure to his mother that all who had to do with the young man declared his conduct to be exemplary. He neither drank, nor gambled, nor betted, nor ran wild in any way.

He had, since he could speak, as a sort of matter of course, been continually in love, a succession of loves, but all of a refined and, in his imagination at least, elevating nature. His ideal standard of womanhood, taken from those among whom he had passed his boyhood, was high, and each succeeding charmer, as she was promoted to the first place in his affections, was endowed by his fancy with the requisite measure of virtues and graces, however far she really was from possessing either.

During his stay at College, and for some time after he left it, this young gentleman declared his intention of taking Orders,—a plan of life highly approved of by his mother and sisters, and not gainsaid by his father. His persuasions in those days were of the extreme Anglican or Ritualistic class; and he broke off, with acute pain to himself, from one of the most durable attachments he had experienced, with a view to a celibate life.

The lady of his choice, not without tears, but with a brave heart, assented to this sacrifice. Mrs. Bertram, though herself very 'High Church,' was not a little angry at the affair.

She did not blame her son, but roundly scolded his second sister, who was the dearest friend of her brother's *fiancée*, and the confidante of both parties, and told her she had acted like a fool.

The result perhaps justified Mrs. Bertram's frank strictures. The *fiancée*, who declared her intention of entering a convent, was carried to London by her parents, who did not share her views, and there, before six months had elapsed, married a thriving barrister.

I do not know whether it was this which disgusted Spencer Bertram with his own chosen career ; but soon afterwards, being away from home on a tour, he wrote to his mother that he had changed his mind, and would not take Orders.

On his return home his father explained to him that he ought not to delay in choosing some other profession. His own handsome income depended on his life and health ; the expensive habits of the family had precluded any savings ; and Mrs. Bertram's money would not do more than support herself and her daughters. The young man agreed to the wisdom of all his father said, and several solemn family councils sat, to decide the momentous question.

The Army his mother would not hear of ; besides, as his father truly observed, the army was hardly a profession in the sense of a provision for life, except indeed the boy went to India. Fortunately he was too old for that, as the bare thought of it made his mother weep.

His father's profession too was decided *nem. con.* to be out of the question. ' How could such

a delicate, sensitive organization bear the ordeal of those horrid hospitals ?' asked Mrs. Bertram. Her husband shrugged his shoulders, but knew he need not speak.

There remained the Bar, and to this young Spencer began to direct his attention, but the dry labour daunted him. He declared he knew he never should be a good barrister ; the diplomatic service would suit him much better.

This presented no small difficulties ; but his mother prayed, his father as usual yielded, and after no end of interest made and working of secret oracles, Dr. Bertram, through an influential patient, got his son nominated attaché to one of our foreign embassies.

There he got on swimmingly for a while ; all his talents and acquirements had full play, and were of a class to gain him distinction in his new position.

A romantic mystery hangs over the retirement of Mr. Spencer Bertram from official life.

There was a story, which his sisters implicitly believed, about an exalted lady having fallen in love with him, and shown it in a most im-

prudent manner. More prosaic people averred that his chief found Mr. Bertram so very lazy and inattentive to business, that after repeated warnings he was about to be sent to an out-of-the-way unpopular post, and resigned in disgust.

Whatever the cause was, he came home again unemployed, just before his father's death.

Dr. Bertram's money matters were left in some disorder. His house in town and other property had to be sold to pay his debts. The young man too had contracted debts, and these his mother paid from her own money, thereby diminishing her twenty thousand pounds till only a moderate income remained to support herself and her five daughters, none of whom seemed likely to marry. Their brother had stolen all the beauty and attractions of the family.

Young Spencer was very fond of his mother and sisters, and he was always full of generous *impulses*. He blamed himself freely for his former unsettled ways in a manner that doubled the admiration of all his female listeners, and declared himself ready to submit to any drudgery and any labour, to retrieve the fortunes of his family.

It was unfortunate that some valid objection seemed to offer at every opening, till at length a mercantile friend of his father's, who had a branch house in Brazil, proposed to the young man a share in that business.

His mother still further reduced her capital by giving him two thousand pounds to invest in the partnership; and bitter as the parting was to those women whose lives were bound up in his, they swallowed their tears and aided him cheerfully in procuring and packing the most luxurious outfit affection could devise and money could procure.

In Brazil he had remained three years, and had now come home very tired of the business and of the senior manager—a hard practical canny Scotchman, with no sympathies for the enthusiastic dreamy young man placed under him,—and somewhat impaired in health by the climate.

He was very uncertain whether he should ever return, but meantime his mother had lost money in some unsuccessful railway speculations, and had also furnished sums at intervals to her son, so she was anxious that he should not forsake

his present business, even though that business involved prolonged separation from her.

A sensible marriage she wisely thought the best thing to 'settle' the young man, and, pending the prospect of such, she gladly saw him go to pay a visit to his uncle and cousin, who she knew had more influence over him than any other persons.

'Spencer has never to my knowledge done a wrong thing since he was born,' wrote the mother to Edith; 'he has always been truthful, loving'—you are quite right, mamma!—'and generous, and quite averse to the common vices of young men. The only thing that grieves me, dear Edith, is his want of consideration for vulgar cares. Proceeding from his nobler nature, as it does, it has, in my present circumstances, become very trying. He talks of giving up his Brazilian business. I hope he will listen to you, and that you will show him how *ruinous* such a course would be. If he could meet with any young lady of good sense and good principles whom he would like to marry, I think it would steady his views on this subject (he never needed steadying on any other). I have still something to spare

for my boy, and neither his sisters nor I grudge him anything we possess. It does not therefore signify if his choice falls on a portionless girl. Be she who she may, if she is *worthy* to be Spencer's wife, I shall receive her with open arms, and give them what I can to make them comfortable.'

Mrs. Bertram wrote very freely to Edith, who had been one of her son's early playmates, and had always had much influence over him. Of course he had fallen in love with Edith: that was long ago.

Both families would have objected to the cousinship, but Edith only laughed at the boy.

Since then he knew of course all her sad history, but had shown no disposition to renew his attachment. Second love toward the same object was never in that young man's line.

'Edith, Edith! queen of my soul! where are you?' sang the voice of Mr. Spencer Bertram, as he sought the ladies along the terrace.

'Miss Blake will think you are insane, Spencer,' said his cousin. 'Remember she is not accustomed to you, as I am. She is in the habit of associating with sensible people.'

‘I know, I know,’ said Spencer; ‘Miss Blake is a sensible person. But what can I do? I never was one; and’—turning to Honor, and looking in her face again—‘“like likes unlike” sometimes, does it not? I am sure Miss Blake will not expect impossibilities; she will let me talk nonsense now and then.’

‘I fear she must,’ laughed Edith, ‘except she forsakes us altogether during your stay.—There is the dinner-bell.’

Honor wondered why it was she kept growing red under the glance that had just met hers. She in her mature dignity of nearly twenty-one years blushing like a girl of sixteen! But as regarded sensible people, was it not a little wearying to be always sensible? Except Lady Tracy’s gleams of humour, which were more satirical than lively, how staid and solemn everybody she had to do with was! The nouns and verbs and rules of syntax among which her working hours were passed were very grave facts, and at home or with her friends it was the same; dear Edith was sometimes sad, and her father always ‘sensible;’ Newton was serious, Mrs. Blake grave, and Conny, though

frivolous in tastes and flippant in mind, was always very soberly in earnest about her own great aims, while the silly talk of the society she loved was most wearisome in its solemn folly. Even Emmy was quiet and thoughtful, as a child living much with older people often becomes.

Would it not be a relief—a blessed glimpse of liberty—to listen to nonsense, which was not folly, once in a way? And in this Spencer Bertram liberally indulged her. To talk delightful nonsense was an art in which this young man excelled, and which, when particularly pleased, or wishing to please, he freely practised. His wonderful memory served him well here; quotations most inappropriate, and therefore laughter-provoking, blended with clever sudden gleams of real wit, clever sayings that might have made the fortune of many ‘diners-out,’ all poured forth so carelessly, the hearer remembered little beyond the fact of enchantment: such was his conversation at times.

Not but that he could talk, and talk well, on graver subjects when he chose.

Whatever he did he seemed to do well,

perhaps from the art of refusing to do other things at all. When he said, 'like likes unlike,' he spoke a truth he and Honor were soon to realize.

Spencer Bertram had never before, he averred to himself, met with a woman possessing so many mental attractions as Honor, without one particle of the alloy female vanity mixes with the charms of those who are, or think themselves, handsome. 'Her face is plain, certainly,' mused the young man, 'but I have seen a thousand pretty faces less attractive.' And what like was the Honor of whom he spoke thus? When we last looked at her with criticising eyes, she was an awkward untidy child. What was she now? Had years moulded her features into finer shape, or taken all the freckles from her skin? Not so; the title of this story is *BONA FIDE*: 'a plain woman.' Honor never was anything else; but she was no longer slatternly or awkward.

Her figure, if wanting in the *svelte* elegance that distinguished Conny's form, was fairly well shaped, and alive with all those natural movements that speak of active duties, ruled over by

a cultivated mind ; her own artistic sense, mingled with the genius of the people she had lived amongst since her girlhood, had taught her to dress always well ; that is, always with that fitness towards place and time and person, the want of which makes a really well-dressed woman so rare a thing. Her voice had always been pleasant, and her long residence abroad had obliterated all local Irish accent, except just so much as gave character and piquancy to her tones.

It is a pleasant thing to look on active neatly-clad feet, even if they be a size larger than fashion demands ; and those white hands, though no smaller than in the days of Isabel Wedderburn's misfitting present, spoke silently, in their deft movements, of kind household cares and busy deeds of love, deeds which found their echo in the blue eyes, grown deeper and more eloquent, as the mind within gained beauty and strength.

Lay aside all poetry of description, and what did those who now looked at Honor Blake see ? A young woman of nearly one-and-twenty, of middle stature and comely shape, quick and

vigorous in all her movements, dressed in sober colours, with perfect taste of form and blending hues; her lineaments plain, and rather large, her complexion freckled, hair of a somewhat leaden auburn, arranged with faultless neatness, and eyes that spoke straight to the souls they gazed on, by virtue of that within which gave them their charm.

‘She is worth a thousand beauties!’ said young Bertram to himself; ‘that is the sort of woman to raise a man above himself, and make him worthy of her love. As for what Honor thought—what shall I say of her? *He* insisted on walking home with her that first evening. Honor was not ignorant of French etiquette on this point. She indeed, in her position of teacher, had the tacit permission of the good folk of Bayonne to thread their town alone, without remark; but Conny never went abroad without fitting escort, and neither sister ever walked alone with any gentleman, not even Mr. Tracy.

Honor demurred, and felt a little uncomfortable, when Spencer said he would see her home. Edith had bid her farewell at the door,

and she thought he would leave her at the garden-gate, but she soon found her mistake ; and if it was at first rather embarrassing, it was so delightful !

Was it not strange, that in that grey twilight, the Cambo woods shone gayer and fairer than in the warmest sunshine ?

It was the first of many such walks, of excursions by hill and valley—where, though both families were nominally present, these two saw only each other,—of long days together, within doors and without, when music, art, poetry, and every common incident of life, all became the slaves of love, and did the blind god's bidding, as they have done in ages past, and will to the end of time.

CHAPTER III.

‘VOUS AVEZ PERDU LES INDES.’

IT was in that Cambo wood that Spencer, one evening in early June, told his love—told it in glowing words to wondering Honor: she, who never had been loved, save perhaps by little Emmy, before.

The thought dazzled and confused her, as boundless wealth flung suddenly to some starving wretch might do.

‘Think again,’ she said humbly, ‘I am not like you. I am not beautiful; how can you love me? Oh, do not let me deceive myself! It will make no difference with me. I should, at least I think I should, always have felt towards you much as I do, if you had never said what you have, and I should not have minded much; but oh, do not let me believe you love me, and then—then—’ Her voice broke

down at this point, and Spencer caught her in his arms, and kissed away her tears, and swore to be true for ever.

Could she doubt longer?

‘My queen!’ he said; ‘you shall do with me what you will! You shall give all my efforts stability, and show me the way to excel! You shall be the teacher and guide, and I will make you proud of me! I will redeem all my lost time and opportunities with you to lean upon, you to love me!’

And Honor accepted the office thankfully.

No thought crossed her mind that it was the man’s part to support and guide the woman; no wish to be in her turn comforted and loved.

To cherish, to serve, to shelter from all possible care the beloved one, as a mother does her child—such is the love of the Honors of the world, such their theory of life’s joys and duties.

The old, old story—the one who loves and the one who generously submits to the process of being loved. Not that Spencer did not at that moment love or believe he loved Honor. His *swan*—appreciated at last by him alone, of

all the world—as he called her in playful allusion to the 'ugly duckling' of Hans Andersen's story; her very want of beauty elevated his new passion in his own eyes, and robed it with as much of unselfishness as ever belonged to the emotions of that young man.

Could Honor doubt him! Could she do aught but surrender herself to this delicious day-dream, and wonder if she could ever, ever love him in return one half so well as he deserved!

Then Spencer went on to tell her of his Brazilian home, which should be hers; and he begged that, for a short time at least, their engagement should be secret, even from Edith.

This was Spencer Bertram's way. He dearly loved a little mystery. There was really no need for one in the present instance, only some letters he expected shortly from Brazil would tell him whether he must return there at once or not, and till these arrived he begged Honor to be silent about their love.

She agreed, not willingly, but because she could refuse him nothing. He was about to

proceed the next day with some tourist friends on a short trip into the mountains, so to-night was to be farewell, for a week or two at least; and as they drew near the end of their walk, both lingered willingly to defer the hour of parting. Suddenly they heard a voice, first rather distant, then nearer, calling their names, and looking back saw Monsieur le Comte de Trouvaille, who was spending the summer at Cambo, hastening after them along the path with a spasmodic little trot, and calling out some words they could not catch.

‘He says you have lost something,’ said Mr. Bertram. ‘What is that in his hand? your handkerchief?’

No; Honor’s handkerchief was safe, and she put her hand up to the little brooch that fastened her collar. That too was in its place. The days were past when Honor’s pins used to be stuck in so carelessly as to make loss of such things not uncommon.

As Monsieur de Trouvaille came nearer, the thing in his hand proved to be a newspaper; and when, panting and breathless, he overtook the lovers, what he said was—

‘*Vous avez perdu les Indes.*’

Spencer Bertram opened his eyes; Honor uttered a cry of inquiry.

‘Yes,’ went on the Count, opening his newspaper and indicating a paragraph; ‘there it is. Your slaves, your sepoy, your army of mercenaries have revolted! They have risen as one man and murdered every English person! men, women, and children—not a white face left! Your Governor-General will be hard set to save his own life! The supremacy of England in the East is over!’ and he snapped his fingers.

Spencer Bertram looked at the newspaper and changed colour. What educated Englishman, however absorbed in personal cares or pleasures, did not change colour at those tidings?

‘You seem very well content, Monsieur le Conte,’ he said.

‘No; not exactly so. I pity your brave men out there, and above all I pity the ladies and children; but what can I say? As a Frenchman, I cannot regret that the pride of Albion should be humbled!’

‘It may not be humbled so much as you

think. Thanks for the news, Monsieur;' and drawing Honor's hand into his arm, he led her away.

'What are you crying for, Honor? You have no friends there?'

'Not I, not I; but dear Lady Tracy. Oh, Spencer, this will break her heart!'

'Will it?' said Spencer carelessly. 'I don't think people break their hearts for things of that kind.'

'But her daughters! her sons-in-law! her grandchildren!—so many of her friends are there.'

'Perhaps they have all escaped. How can we know? Most likely it is all an exaggeration. At anyrate, Honor, I think it is rather heartless of you to waste our last few minutes together—to spoil our memory of *to-day*—by lamentations about a parcel of people you have never seen, and probably never will see!'

Honor dried her eyes and felt abashed. She never said, she never thought, that the smallest sorrow of any of *his* friends would have been felt by her for his sake, as indeed he would have expected it to be.

The twilight had sunk nearly into night ere they reached Mrs. Blake's house,—the calm soft odorous summer night, with its music of chirping grasshoppers and rustling leaves, and now and again the voice of a nightingale from the thickets.

Honor went up-stairs to her room, and sat down there in the dark. Pauline put a letter into her hand as she opened the door, but Honor did not heed it.

His farewell kiss was on her lips—his last words in her ears. She had no thought for anything else. She seemed to live in every minute of that half-hour more than in years of her past life. After a while Pauline knocked at the door with a message from Newton, summoning her to evening prayers.

Honor obeyed. She heard little of what Newton read; but oh! how she prayed for blessings on her love as she knelt!

‘ From whom is your letter?’ asked Mrs. Blake, when they rose from their knees.

Honor had forgotten it, but she opened it now and read it—first languidly, then with an eager cry of pain.

‘HOTEL DE —, PARIS, *June* —, 1857.

‘MY DEAR HONOR,—I have very sad news. The papers will tell you of this terrible Indian business. We have too much reason to fear dear Georgy, her husband and child, are among the victims.

‘Langston writes from Oude. He had no certain news, but feared the worst, and the newspapers confirm it. Annie and her children he had sent, in safety he hopes, to Cawnpore. The rebellion was thickening round him fast. The blow has been a dreadful one to my poor mother. She had been very anxious for some time past, from news she had in private letters of correspondents, who knew much of what was going on, and, unhappily, I was out of the way when the mail came this morning. She received her letters while standing at the top of the stairs, and, you know her impetuous way, tore them open.

‘She fainted, and fell down the stairs, has broken her arm, and is severely bruised. She now lies in great danger, and excessive suffering, mental and bodily.

‘She wants you to come to her, if you can

leave home, and if Mrs. Blake will allow you. Isabel is in Scotland, and my mother says she prefers you to any one else. She thinks you will come. I shall have some one to meet you at the terminus on Wednesday morning, believing you will not delay.—With best regards to you all, yours very sincerely,

‘TOM TRACY.’

Mrs. Blake and Newton were not backward in sympathy when this letter was read to them.

‘I may go, mamma, may I not?’

Mrs. Blake was quite well now.

‘Certainly you may, but you *can’t* go to-morrow. If I had known what was in the letter I should have sent it to you at once. You are generally home earlier.’

‘I think I might get a carriage for to-morrow,’ said Honor; ‘is the Auberge shut, Pauline?’

‘Yes, Mademoiselle; they are early people. The lights were put out before I called you to prayers.’

How Honor grieved now over that half-hour lost in love-dreams!

Pauline saw her trouble.

‘I know the wife of the ostler well, Mademoiselle,’ she said; ‘she will not mind my waking her. I will run over there now, if you will watch to open the door on my return.’

Honor watched anxiously; Pauline was away what seemed a long time, but returned successful. A carriage should be ready at earliest daylight to-morrow, to convey Honor and her luggage to Bayonne in time for the Paris train. Mrs. Blake was a little startled at such haste. Honor could never pack her things to-night; but Honor said that would not take her long. She bid her mother and Newton good-bye, kissed sleeping Emmy, and asked Pauline to give her a long candle.

‘Let me help you, Mademoiselle,’ said the girl. Honor was always a great favourite with the servants. Soon after midnight all her preparations were completed, and she thanked Pauline.

‘Now, go to bed,’ she said.

‘Very well, Mademoiselle; you do the same. Trust me to awake you in good time, and to have a cup of coffee ready. Good-night, Mademoiselle.’

‘ Good-night, Pauline.’

The door shut, but Honor did not obey the French girl’s advice. She sat down at her desk, which she had reserved when Pauline had carried her other luggage into the passage, and wrote a letter—not a very long one, but it occupied a long long time. She sat before the desk for half-an-hour before she could make a beginning. At last she finished it, sealed it, and addressed it to

SPENCER BERTRAM, Esq.,
La Maison Blanche,
près de Cambo.

Then she wrote to Edith telling her of the cause of her sudden departure; then she took the first letter and looked at the superscription. ‘ He is away from home,’ she said; ‘ and Edith will know my writing—why was he so anxious for secrecy? besides, I cannot write to him *first!*’ so she applied the letter to the candle till it was consumed, and added a postscript to Edith, ‘ Remember me to your cousin. I hope he will enjoy his trip.’

Her candle had burnt out by this time, and

she leant out of the open window for a while, till the dawn began to tinge the east. Then she threw herself on her bed, and snatched one short sleep before Pauline knocked. She was in good time for the train, and when it was fairly off, and Bayonne left behind, she seemed for the first time to realize all that had happened yesterday.

She would have believed that it was a dream, but for a little turquoise ring he had put on her finger. She looked at this ring fondly a hundred times, musing, with ever fresh wonder, again and again on the strange thing that *she* should be beloved by one 'so beautiful! so clever! so good!' She fell asleep holding the precious turquoise tight in the fingers of the other hand; it was her solace through the weary hours of that sultry dusty afternoon, her talisman during the comfortless night that succeeded; at any other time, the thoughts of Lady Tracy's sad condition would have made her very miserable; but, with her ring before her eyes, she felt that she possessed one treasure from which no sorrow could part her.

Mr. Tracy was waiting for her at the ter-

minus. Honor was quite shocked when she saw him. He had evidently been up all night ; his eyes were bloodshot, and his face haggard and worn, as if by excessive pain and anxiety. He could hardly command his voice to welcome Honor, and answer her questions about his mother.

‘ She is much the same ; she made me come to meet you ; how thankful she will be to have you !’ Then he took her to a seat, and went into the bureau to claim her luggage. When they were seated in a carriage, driving through the streets of Paris, still in their early morning garb, Mr. Tracy spoke again, in a low changed voice, with his head turned away :—

‘ All I told you is TRUE, Honor. We had further news from a friend in London yesterday. I wish to tell you before you see my mother.’

‘ All about—about your sister Georgy?’

‘ Yes ; and a lot more. I do not think my mother will ever recover it. Oh, Honor, it is dreadful !’ and that strong straightforward, matter-of-fact young man leant his head on his hands, and sobbed like a child.

Honor's tears fell like rain. She put out her hand and laid it on his.

'Mr. Tracy—Tom! *do not*; your mother wants you to comfort her.'

'Yes,' he said, lifting his face, 'that is what I must think of now. I am not one to give way generally, Honor.'

'But you are terribly tired and anxious now, I know,' she said softly. 'It is a blessing that Mrs. Langston is safe.'

'Safe!' he repeated. 'I fear not, Honor; that is the worst. We are only at the beginning of it all. I cannot tell you how I fear for her also.'

'She is in God's hands,' replied Honor solemnly.

'Yes, yes; that is all we can say—all we can think of. If it were not for that no one could bear it. Keep that before my mother's eyes, Honor. God bless you for coming to her!' and he wrung her hand till the sharp setting of the turquoise ring chafed and pierced her fingers.

If Honor had been given to trust in omens, she might have deemed it an unlucky one that her betrothal ring should use her so ere she had worn it a second day.

When they reached the hotel, Mr. Tracy went for a moment into his mother's room, and returning, led Honor in and left her there.

‘ I knew you would come,’ said her old friend's broken voice, and one hand was stretched out feebly to take hers. Honor fell on her knees beside the bed, and covered the hand with kisses and tears. She could not speak ; but her sympathy entered into Lady Tracy's heart, and soothed it without need of words.

For many weeks the old lady lay between life and death. The physical injuries she had received must have been always dangerous at her time of life, but when to this was added such a severe mental shock, it was a wonder she survived it. There was many a home in mourning in those days, but to few the calamity brought all it did to Lady Tracy.

One of her daughters, with her husband and child, had been murdered. Her fears for the other were too soon to be realized in their worst form ; her oldest and dearest friends were falling like autumn leaves ; and young ones, in the promise of whose career she took all the lively interest only one so young-hearted could, just

showed in their deaths what their lives would have been. And beyond this, the traditions of her youth and happiest years, the faith of her lifetime, was shattered at a blow.

That misplaced trust, which was breaking many a gallant heart, laying many a noble head low, had added its weight to the burden which during those long summer weeks in Paris nearly crushed that aged sufferer into her grave.

Lady Tracy had *believed in the Bengal sepoy*—believed in the men her husband had led to victory—in one common service with whom, and ever thinking of the welfare of them and their brethren, he had laboured from boyhood to his honoured old age.

It is not wise to misplace our trusts! It is not wise to trust any one entirely, lest we find ourselves deceived.

Carry out the doctrine to the full, and let me join the ranks of the fools who are betrayed rather than remain among the wise, whose hearts are governed more decorously, who keep scales and weights for their affections, and the reasons thereof!

Who knows whether among the broken trusts

of this world do not lie our spirits’ purest lessons for the next? So, mayhap, Lady Tracy found it to be.

‘ *The husks* have lost their flavour now, Honor,’ she said, with a sad faint smile to the girl who sat by her, reading at her desire the ever new tale of the erring child’s forgiveness. ‘ Let me too arise and go to my Father.’

In the earnest piety which during some years past had been growing up in Honor’s heart, the elder lady found her best comfort. Perhaps that was one reason why she had asked for Honor rather than any one else to tend her sick-bed.

There were times when this world’s joys or sorrows grew very small and mean to the girl : when night had fallen upon the great city, and the whirl of life was still, when as it seemed to her there was no one awake except herself, constant watcher, and the sufferer, to whom night brought always doubled pain.

Then she would read from the one Book in the sick-room, of the hereafter prepared for those who have ‘ passed through great tribulation,’ or, better still, the story of Gethsemane ; and young

though she was, beloved as she deemed herself by her first love, her soul would be filled with longings for immortality—for the ‘wings like a dove,’ desired by him of old to bear her and that dear stricken friend alike away from it all.

But it was not always that peace was in the sick-room. There were days when Lady Tracy could find little response to anything except the plaintive wailings of the prophet over Judea—words written twenty-four centuries before, but making echo in many a heart that day—words that in an old Bible I have are underlined and marked all over with dates of that summer of 1857.

Mr. Tracy shared all Honor’s cares and vigils, and devoted himself to his mother with a sensitive affection, more remarkable because he was not usually a person full of demonstrative feelings.

Honor learned during that time how STERLING he was—how good, how true, how duteous, and how pious, under that simple English exterior which professes nothing.

He wished to keep the Indian newspapers and the English ones, running over with Indian

sorrows, from his mother, but she would not have it.

The attempt only increased her anxiety, and so he and Honor were obliged to yield, and to read to her, when each successive mail arrived, as best they could those terrible tragedies where heroic self-devotion, high courage, and patient endurance hallowed suffering into martyrdom.

Many names familiar to Lady Tracy were scattered along these pages—not a few known to her son. At times Honor found she had more command of her voice than he had, though she too often gave way.

I am not going to follow them through their sorrowful task. I am not going to ask my readers to come back with me to the magazine at Delhi, the frail entrenchments of Cawnpore, the Residency at Lucknow, nor yet to many a less celebrated spot,—the small fort, the private dwelling-house hastily organized for defence, or the open parade-ground, where there was none!

I will not weary you, my readers, by telling you how, when the torch of rebellion raised answering fires from every side of the doomed

land, another beacon-light sprang up in a thousand brave hearts, and blazed triumphant, above carnage and disease, treachery and despair, to the last! There are some simple, common words that are very old-fashioned, and have become vulgar—I think from vulgar use; but there are Englishmen living yet to whom Nelson's motto is an abiding truth, to whom *duty* is never a vulgar word. One who died at Lucknow made no other aim than that his boast; and all the brave blood that then watered India's plains flowed forth ungrudgingly at that watchword.

Yes; *they did their duty*. But we will not talk about it. Since the days of Aristides, have not men's public virtues been wearisome to the ears of their fellow-citizens?

A great organ of English opinion pronounced, a terse and pretty epigram as their requiem, when all was over and India saved—

‘An army of mutineers, officered by clerks!’

A generous French gentleman,—one who, like M. de Trouvaille, would have been glad to see England humbled, but who not the less could venerate high deeds wherever he met them,—said to me about the same time—

‘ You English have done many great things, but nothing you have ever accomplished has come up to your deeds of yesterday and to-day in India. You have surpassed yourselves and surprised the world. We confess freely no other nation could have stood up against such fearful odds.’

I give the two verdicts, and let the reader choose between them.

CHAPTER IV.

TOO MUCH LOVE.



WEEK after Honor's arrival in Paris, Mr. Tracy one morning, coming to relieve guard in his mother's sick-room, handed to his cousin a letter, one look at the address of which sent in a moment the blood to her cheeks, paled with their long night-watch. In her own room she opened that precious letter, her first 'love-letter.' It began by upbraiding her for her sudden desertion, and went on, and ended. We have all of us, I daresay, received, if not written, such documents, and we know how absurd they are.

Honor thought hers was the dearest letter ever written. She carried it about inside her dress till the paper was worn into holes.

She answered it of course, in hours when

Mr. Tracy believed she was sleeping while he watched; and an answer came, which in its turn was answered, as was another and another.

Spencer was going to Pau, he told her, to pass the time of her absence.

She had a short letter telling of his arrival there, and then silence. Honor feared she had wearied him by her own sad letters; but how could they be gay?

The mail that last came in had told of the death of—well, it is a hard thing to say where every man was a hero, but I will say it,—of the best man in India; and Lady Tracy was more stricken by that than by all that had gone before, Honor thought.

‘You were with me when I last parted from him, child,’ she said. ‘I told you then I should never see him again. O Honor, Honor! I wish you and I and all of us might be taken where he is now!’

‘So do I, aunty!’ sobbed Honor. Spencer’s letter was pressed to her heart, Spencer’s ring was on her finger, yet she said, ‘So do I.’

Nearly at the same time came the history of

Cawnpore. I cannot write of that. Lady Tracy was childless, but for that loving son ; and Honor, in the terrible anguish of her friends, forgot herself,—almost forgot to care that Spencer had not written for a month or more.

Soon after this, Lady Tracy's doctor said her arm had healed, nothing but nervous depression remained to be combated now, and he advised change of scene.

Then Mrs. Robertson wrote. Mr. Tracy had borne immense professional inconvenience and loss by his long stay in Paris. She had taken a house in Brighton ; would Tom bring his mother over by the steamer from Dieppe, and intrust her to Isabel's care ?

The doctor approved, and this seemed far the best thing to do. Lady Tracy assented.

Honor was not included in Mrs. Robertson's invitation ; but her mother had been of late urgent for her return home, and she felt, she *did* feel, now Lady Tracy was better, she wanted to see Spencer again.

He had not written for so long a time, possibly because her mother had said she would

soon be back. Conny was at home now, at Cambo; but Edith and her father had left that place. Mr. Bertram had been ill again, and some one had recommended a German spa.

They had gone off to Germany rather suddenly, and Honor grieved whenever she thought how she should miss them.

‘And you are going back to Bayonne, my child?’ said Lady Tracy, stroking the auburn locks that bent beside her convalescent chair.

‘Yes, aunty.’

‘Well, well, it does not much matter. Go for a walk, child.’

‘Let me wait till Mr. Tracy comes home to stay with you.’

‘Do what I tell you, child. Go now, with Tom.’

Honor obeyed. For the first time she and Mr. Tracy went to walk alone together.

They walked through the streets of Paris, now very empty in the glowing September days. Mr. Tracy was silent for some time.

At last he said—‘My mother will miss you, Honor.’

‘She will have Isabel—Mrs. Robertson.’

‘Yes; but you are more to her.—Honor!’

She started at his tone, and faltered, ‘Well?’

‘Could you live with her always?’

‘Of course I could! How can you ask such a question? Dear, *dear* aunty!’

‘I mean, could you be her daughter—my wife? I have learned to love you very dearly, Honor. I never loved any woman before, and do not know how to say it properly; but do you think you can love me at all in return? Will you have me, Honor?’

Honor could not for a few seconds speak, from excessive astonishment and other mingled feelings. At last she found words:—

‘O Tom! I am so sorry to hear you say this! I ought to have told you: I am engaged to be married.’

‘You are? I did not guess it,’ he answered in a surprised tone; then added, ‘Do not let this fret you then, dear Honor. I must bear it as better men have done their crosses.’

They walked home in silence, and Honor ran to her room to think.

Oh the strange fate! That she, so long unloved, should now possess a surplus of the

treasure! should grieve, and with good cause, to see the love of a true heart offered to her, which she could neither accept nor return!

Mr. Tracy did not wish to tell his mother what had passed during that walk, but she forced it from him.

When Honor next came to her, the old lady's manner was so stern the girl burst into tears.

'Forgive me, dear aunt!' she cried.

'For refusing my son? Yes; I need not seek far for a woman to wed *him*. But you might have trusted me, Honor. I had no secrets from you.'

Honor begged forgiveness.

It was granted in words, but she and Lady Tracy were not again at ease together during the remaining days of her stay in Paris.

Tom Tracy saw her off in the Bordeaux train. He never spoke again directly of his disappointment; but at parting he said, grasping her hand—

'You know you must not mind my mother's present vexation, Honor. It will pass over, and she will soon love you as before. And

you must look on me as a brother, remember that !'

Honor cried a great deal after that parting.

She did not begin to think happily about Spencer till the train reached Orleans.

CHAPTER V.

FALSE.

THE express from Paris reached Bayonne in the afternoon ; and Honor, leaving her luggage to be forwarded by the omnibus, walked to Anglet.

She thought she should enjoy the walk, after the confinement of the railway-carriage ; but she found herself not so strong as she used to be.

The trying time in Lady Tracy's sick-room had weakened her a good deal, and she felt very tired before she had gone half-way, and extremely glad when she entered the garden gate.

She knew that her mother was to return from Cambo the week before, and that Conny too would be at home ; but she was somewhat surprised to meet Charlie at the gate, as she thought his summer holidays must have ended.

Mrs. Blake had not written for the last ten days.

‘You here, Charlie?’ said his sister, kissing him.

‘Yes; I persuaded mamma to let me stay to see you, and to go as far as Bordeaux with her and Conny.’

‘I am so glad you have come, Honor,’ said Conny warmly; ‘I was afraid you might be detained at the last.’

Honor was so much pleased by her sister’s unusual show of affection, she did not stop to ask what Charlie meant; besides, Emmy was hanging round her with kisses, and there were her mother and Newton to greet her, and Pauline smiling welcome behind. It was very pleasant to be at home again, she thought.

‘We have waited tea for you,’ said Mrs. Blake; ‘let Emmy take your bonnet.’

‘Any letters for me, Pauline?’ asked Honor.

‘Yes, Mademoiselle; two.’

She gave them to her, and Honor opened one. It was from Miss Morris, saying that she had, at Honor’s request, renewed her tuitions for the first week or two after the holidays, but

was ready to hand over Honor's pupils to their own teacher as soon as the latter should arrive.

She said she felt so grateful to Miss Blake, who had made for her 'a connexion' at Bayonne. She had a goodly set of pupils waiting for herself, when Honor's return should set her free to attend on them.

Honor read most of this letter at the tea-table, to which her family had drawn her; the other letter she had concealed till she could be alone to read it. The address was in *his* writing; how well she knew it!

She had, ever since the train reached Bayonne, been unconsciously watching for him. She thought he would have found means to know she was coming, though, having written twice without reply, she could not write again. He was not ill; for Edith said in a letter received two days ago, 'My cousin still hovers about the Pyrenees, preferring it to any other place; he is to return to Brazil soon.'

Every figure in the distance as she walked home had made her heart beat; but now she had the next best thing—a letter. It was too precious to open hurriedly. She sat down to tea.

'We have news for you, Honor,' said Mrs. Blake; 'Conny is going to be married.'

'Ain't it jolly?' said Charlie, his mouth full of bread and jam. 'I wish I could go to England for the wedding.'

'Yes,' said Conny; 'I am really, Honor. Mamma and I are going to England directly for the ceremony. His mother is not strong, and dreads a long journey, and she very much wishes to be present, so we are going to England. That is why I wanted you to come home.'

Honor did not feel quite so much flattered as before at her sister's warm greeting.

Conny went on: 'Besides, there is another reason, Honor. I had to get some more money from mamma while I was at Pau, Honor, and now she says she has none left. Her quarter is not due for a month, and Phil's remittance not till Christmas, and you see your pupils' money has not come in lately.'

'I had that all in advance,' said Honor. 'Lady Tracy gave me really more than I should have got before the holidays.'

'Well, I suppose it is all spent,' replied

Conny, 'so that does not much matter; only we must get some more somehow, for be married without a trousseau *I won't.*'

'My dear girl!' remonstrated her mother; 'think of what you told me yourself.—Mr. Bertram has offered to give her everything, Honor.'

'Who?' came from Honor's lips with a sort of cry.

'Mr. Bertram. Of course I mean Mr. Spencer Bertram. Did we not tell you it is he to whom Conny is engaged? He met her at Pau. Strange, was it not, when we knew him so well? I used at one time to think he was taken with you, Honor. Well, he has behaved most handsomely, and wishes to give Conny her trousseau and outfit himself.'

'And I won't have it, mamma,' cried Conny. 'I have told you so a dozen times. I will have a proper trousseau from my own home, or I won't marry him at all! The outfit for Brazil is another matter. After we are married he may give me anything he likes; but I will not have his mother and sisters telling everybody my wedding-dress was paid for by him! You will get me the money, will you not, Honor?'

‘I will try,’ said Honor in a faint voice.—
‘Mamma, I am very tired; may I go to my room for a little?’

Conny called after her—

‘We want to leave for England on Friday, Honor. Mr. Bertram went off yesterday. I think he might have stayed with me, but he was in such a hurry.’

Yesterday! He must have passed her train on the line!

‘May I come with you, dear Honor?’ pleaded Emmy; ‘I will be very quiet.’

‘Not just now, dear;’ and she shut and locked her door.

Were Conny and her mother raving? or was she awake?

Then she took out his letter.

It is a piteous thing, which in this age of telegraphs has often happened, when a letter, written by a warm, living hand, comes to some loving and beloved one, who knows that the writer is dead!

Something like this Honor felt as she looked on this letter. Then she opened it, and read—

‘Why did you leave me? Was I more

than mortal that I could resist the fascination of your sister's beauty? I know I am a villain! Forgive me, if you can, and forget me!

‘SPENCER BERTRAM.’

When Honor had read this letter she fell flat on the floor in a dead swoon, and there she lay, till the sun had set and the stars were peeping out in the dusk.

She was cold and giddy and stiff when she awoke, and did not know where she was.

She sat upon the ground and tried to think. This was a room at Lucknow!—no, Cawnpore! No; it was—was she going mad! Then she took up the letter beside her, and, by the fading light, read it once more, and once more fell upon the floor, not *now* in happy oblivion, but writhing in agony.

Oh this grief! this grief! how could she bear it?

Had not Conny, Conny the beautiful, enough love and sunshine in her life, but she must take away *her* one ewe lamb! the only treasure poor Honor ever possessed!

She lay on the ground biting her hands in

agony, then twining them in her hair and tearing it, till the physical pain seemed to give her relief for a long time. At length Pauline knocked. It was now quite dark.

‘Did Mademoiselle want a light?’ Honor took the candle without showing herself at the door.

‘Please tell mamma, Pauline, I shall not come down again to-night—I am tired.’

‘Mademoiselle’s luggage has come.’

‘Give me my desk and my bag. That will do; thank you, Pauline; good-night.’

She forced herself to speak calmly, locked the door, and went forward to the table, where she had set the candle, while Pauline gave her the desk.

There, in the glass, Honor caught sight of her own face, tear-stained, haggard, and terrible; and she blushed as she looked at it.

Had she fallen so low as to weep thus, because a man had scorned her love!

She would be stronger than that.

She washed her face and arranged her hair before she did anything else. After that she sat down and thought for a long time. Then

she took out her Bible, and read many of the well-known passages Lady Tracy and she were wont to peruse together, pausing every now and then with her face buried in her hands. She was quite calm again, when she came upon those verses, which no earthly cry of agony will ever exceed,—the echo of the most poignant anguish poor human nature from age to age has ever suffered :—

‘It was not an enemy. For then I could have borne it. But it was *thou*—mine own familiar friend.’

Has any other bitterness ever equalled what these words convey? Honor’s tears broke forth again at them.

Why did not this grief kill her? she asked herself. How could she live through her life from to-day? A year—five years—ten—twenty—even then she would be far within man’s appointed span!

How cruelly long our lives do seem in such moments! Those Indian victims! She had thought to nerve herself to suffering by thinking of their heroism; but they were *dead*—it was over for them; to live years and years in a

world whence all hope, all truth had departed—*that* was the terrible thing!

If those wild Basques, whom she often saw leading their mules, laden with skins of wine from the hills, and looking quite as wild and nearly as dark as any Asiatic, were to come now and murder them all, would she object?

Some memory of Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez's oddities struck her at this moment, and she laughed—a shrill discordant laugh. The noise startled her as if it had come from some one else.

She fell on her knees and prayed God to preserve her reason, and enable her to meet this trial as she ought.

When she rose again she felt the worst was over.

She took out that letter with the worn cover, and all those others, and drew off her turquoise ring. It clung to her hot finger and chafed it as she forced it off, reminding her, involuntarily, of the day when it had hurt her before—the day on which she reached Paris.

All these things she put up in an envelope, and without adding one written line, sealed it

and addressed it to Mr. Bertram, at his mother's house. She knew the address well. Then she went to bed, and, wonderful as it may seem, fell asleep.

The terrible 'next morning' came to her as surely as it does to all mourners beguiled by physical exhaustion into momentary oblivion. She crushed the agony away with a great effort.

'I am not the only one,' she said. 'Let me think of the hundreds who are awakening to fresh misery now.'

And so she bravely got up and dressed herself, and was in good time for morning prayers.

'Honor,' said Conny at breakfast-time—Honor had busied herself talking to Newton when her sister entered, so as to escape any special greeting,—'have you thought again about the money?'

'What do you want me to do?'

'To get me some money for our journey and my trousseau. Cannot you ask Lady Tracy to lend or give it to you?'

'No, that I will not,' said Honor. Of all things she *could not* do, to ask Lady Tracy for money then was the chief.

‘Very well, then. He must go to Brazil by himself,’ said Conny. ‘I will not be married without my trousseau.’

‘And he is so devoted to her, Honor,’ said her mother; ‘it will break his heart. I think you are very cruel.’

Honor winced.

‘How much do you want, Conny?’

‘A thousand francs at least. Mamma’s and my journey will cost something.’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Blake; ‘I have not more money left from Phil’s last remittance than will keep house for Newton here.’

‘I will go to Monsieur Jarny’s, Conny,’ said Honor, ‘and ask him to lend me that sum, to be repaid from my pupils. Then, mamma, there will be no pupil-money for nearly three months.’

‘Very well,’ replied Mrs. Blake; ‘better that than for Conny to break off such a nice marriage.’

Honor had never borrowed money before. It was hard to begin, but she would do nothing to stop the marriage, so after breakfast she walked to Bayonne, posted and registered her

heavy letter, and then she went to Monsieur Jarny's. The French banker was very polite, but regretted he could not oblige the young lady.

'Do you know, Miss Blake,' he said, 'we are already threatened with a considerable loss by your family? A cheque, supposed to be drawn by your relative, Lady Tracy, has been returned to us by her London bankers as a shameless forgery. The London house affirm the name of her signature is not even spelt rightly. Unhappily this bill was sent with some others to a German correspondent, and he had not occasion to send it to England at once. Hence a delay of several months; so the forger may be difficult to trace.'

'I should think,' said Honor, 'the person who actually received the money will easily be found.'

'Yes, you would think so. The clerk who paid it avers he received the cheque from, and gave the money to, an old Basque messenger, Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez. From her it is not easy to ascertain anything. In fact, if Lady Tracy, who has been addressed on the

subject, declares the writing to be a forgery, the case will turn upon the point of who could have gained access to her cheque-book. The cheque was a duly printed one, cut from a book.

‘It is all in the hands of the police, and we are in special trouble because a young clerk in our firm, a relative of one of our partners, has been accused of having the said cheque-book in his possession at one time. Personally I feel sure of Monsieur le Souffleur’s innocence, but he has been accused, and we are very anxiously awaiting the evidence of Lady Tracy to exculpate him.’

Honor’s mind was too weary to take in the full scope of this announcement. She felt sorry for it all in a vague way, and said she knew her aunt kept her cheque-book locked up; but perhaps there would turn out to have been some mistake.

‘The Juge d’Instruction will communicate with your family to-day, I fancy, Mademoiselle, to find out what you know about the other cheques cashed through the same party. I wonder he has not done so before this.’

Honor really did not care. She felt that to-

day there was only one thing she could do—try to get Conny that money. But how?

A sudden thought occurred to her. Bidding Monsieur Jarny good-morning, she hastened to the street where the Le Bœufs lived, entered their house, and told her tale.

Monsieur le Bœuf knew what her pupils were. He could satisfy himself from them that Miss Morris was only employed till Honor's return. 'I shall take them again at once,' she said, 'and will give you all my receipts till this loan is repaid, with interest—if you will lend me this money.'

'Is it for your sister's trousseau?' asked Monsieur le Bœuf.

'Yes; Mr.—he—her *fiancé* offered to provide her with all she requires, but neither my sister nor any of us wishes that.'

'Of course,' said Monsieur le Bœuf, 'I can understand *that* is out of the question. At the same time I must be frank with you. A thousand francs is a large sum!—Louise, what do you say?'

'I say, lend dear Miss Blake the money,' replied his wife. 'She will work hard and pay us faithfully. It is like her unselfish nature to

want this for her sister. It seems to me she never works for herself!’

Honor kissed Madame le Bœuf. It was so sweet to have friends. She felt that through her desolation.

‘You are not well, my dear,’ said the kind Louise, looking more closely in her face as she said adieu.

‘Well? Oh yes! quite well—only tired!’

It wearied her terribly to carry the thousand francs little Monsieur le Bœuf counted over to her with such conscious benevolent humility back to Anglet.

‘There it is, Conny; there is the money!’ handing her the bag.

She was going up-stairs when Mrs. Blake stopped her.

‘What do you know about this, Honor?’

She held out some papers, partly printed, which summoned Mrs. Blake and her two eldest daughters to appear before the Juge d’Instruction the next morning, to depose as to any knowledge they might have of a certain forged cheque passed on Messieurs Jarny and Le Souffleur, bearing the name of Lady Tracy.

‘I heard something about that to-day, mamma. I do not understand it at all.’

‘We must go, at any rate,’ said Mrs. Blake. ‘The man who brought these was very civil, but he said we must not fail.’

‘What a bore!’ said Conny; ‘I wanted so much to get away on Friday. I promised Spencer, and he will be so anxious; and I have twenty things to get before I go—gloves and things.’

‘We may have time for all to-morrow,’ said Mrs. Blake.—‘Honor, I wish you would come down-stairs soon, and talk to me about what you must do while I am away. I feel very anxious about leaving Newton.’

Honor obeyed. She listened conscientiously during several hours to Mrs. Blake’s instructions as to her attendance on Newton and the management of the house during her mother’s absence, and promised to abide by them all. She also helped to forward her mother’s preparations for her journey, and did not go to bed till quite tired out.

‘I never see you at all now, Honor,’ said Emmy, when her sister went with her to her room to hear her evening prayers.

‘You shall sleep in my room to-night, Emmy; and I will tell you about Paris. I did not see much of it, you know; Lady Tracy was so ill all the time; but two or three times she made me go out to see the Louvre and other places.’

This charmed Emmy. She lay awake till Honor came to bed, and made her talk till the elder sister was glad to go to sleep. She was thankful to get through that night so well.

Directly after breakfast the next morning, Mrs. Blake, Honor, and Constance had to set out for Bayonne. Conny grumbled the whole way, but cleared her face from its gloom before she entered the bureau of the Juge d’Instruction. The habit of trying to look well whenever she came into contact with one of the other sex was ‘in grain’ in Conny.

At the top of a not over clean staircase, they found themselves in a wide corridor surrounded by benches, on which sat a choice collection of *the sovereign people*, waiting to have their various matters of business attended to.

Honor was so weary she was glad to sit down with her mother beside two old market-

women. Conny scorned such contact, and posed herself, in the attitude of a photograph by Silvy, against the balustrade.

After a time an officer called them one by one into the judge's room.

The Juge d'Instruction had often met Mrs. Blake and her daughters in society, and was extremely polite in his greeting and in his regrets for the trouble he had caused them. The examination of Constance and her mother was not a long one. Some little difficulty had to be overcome at first through Mrs. Blake's feelings being excessively ruffled when called upon to sign herself by her maiden name—'Emily Carol, widow of Blake.' She felt this to be very rude and insulting, and it required no small exercise of tact on the part of the magistrate to soothe her. He soon discovered that neither she nor her younger daughter could give any evidence at all in the case.

Mrs. Blake had never seen Lady Tracy write a cheque; she did not even know how that lady drew the money she needed. She herself received her funds through the British consul, and should have supposed that Lady

Tracy did the same. She knew Lady Tracy's handwriting and signature, and that in the cheque now shown her was certainly not genuine. Whose writing it was she could not guess; neither Mr. Tracy's, nor his mother's, nor that of any other person she knew. Lady Tracy's Christian name was Honor. It was a family name among the Blakes, and was never spelt in any way but one. The spelling in the cheque, 'Honner,' was not correct; and she had never known any person spell it so that she could remember.

Constance could depose very little more. She too knew nothing of how Lady Tracy drew her money till the week before her aunt left Bayonne, when her sister had brought in her hand a folded paper, which she said was a cheque for a thousand francs, to be presented to Messieurs Jarny and Le Souffleur. It had been sent through Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez.

'Could Mademoiselle remember the date?'

After some thought Conny named it. She remembered it from the date of her own journey to Pau occurring the following week.

‘That exactly accords,’ said the magistrate, looking at his memorandum, ‘with the date of a cheque for that sum said to have been presented by Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez, and duly honoured by the London bankers. The forged cheque has no date, but Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur, the young man who cashed it, affirms it to have been presented six days later than the date of the other.’

‘I know nothing about that,’ said Conny. ‘I never saw Lady Tracy’s cheque-book, nor did I see any cheque of hers but that one, and of that only the outside.’

‘Did your sister give the cheque to Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez in your presence?’

‘She did not,’ said Constance. ‘I remember perfectly: the old woman had just gone out of the gate, so we sent it by Pauline our servant, who ran after her and gave it to her.’

‘How do you know she gave it to her?’

‘Because my sister received the money that evening in my presence from Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez—a thousand francs.’

Constance agreed with her mother about the forged signature.

Then Honor was called. Her evidence appeared more likely to be useful.

She had frequently seen Lady Tracy's cheque-book, and seen her write cheques.

'Where did Lady Tracy keep her book?'

'In her desk.'

'Was her desk always locked?'

'Yes.'

'Did she never put the cheque-book in any other place?'

'Not so far as I know; except one day, when she carried it to Bayonne, and left it behind in Monsieur Jarny's bureau.'

'You were with her that day?' and he cross-examined Honor about this event till he forgot the question that was on his lips regarding where Lady Tracy kept the key of her desk. Honor was so languid and so little herself that day, she never thought about the lost key at the moment, nor if she had would she perhaps have attached much importance to it.

Her questioner went on to examine her about the cheque she had sent through Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez, in which matter her evidence agreed with that of Constance; and

then he asked if she knew aught of any other cheque similarly presented.

Honor said her aunt had on that day told her of having intrusted one for a smaller amount to the Basque messenger some time previously.

He referred to his memoranda.

‘Exactly so; on the 18th of March. A cheque for five hundred francs; the money paid to Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez, and the cheque duly honoured in London.’

Had Honor any reason to believe that the old Basque had brought any more money for her aunt subsequently to the date when she had cashed Honor’s cheque?

Honor was nearly sure her aunt did not draw any more money after that, because two days before she gave Honor that cheque she had been in Bayonne herself, and, in Honor’s presence, gone to the bank for money, paid the rent of her house and some other bills she owed, and had carried home the surplus, which, she said, would suffice her till she reached Paris.

The memorandums furnished by the bankers of the sums Lady Tracy had drawn through them correctly corresponded with this evidence

of Honor's, and the Juge d'Instruction complimented the young lady on her clear memory and plain way of stating facts.

'One more question,' he said. 'Your own Christian name is similar to that of your relative. Do you always spell it as you have written it now?'

'Yes.'

'Does Lady Tracy?'

'Always. There is no other way of spelling it.'

'Then this is not her writing?' showing the forged cheque.

'Certainly not.'

He did not ask another question. Had he put to her the one Mrs. Blake had answered so confidently, how could Honor have declared that she never knew any one write her name 'Honner,' when she suddenly remembered Charlie always did so?

This flashed into her mind all at once, as she looked at the cheque; but she was asked nothing more, and of course it was absurd to think of such a thing, as Charlie could not have written that.

The magistrate accompanied her back to the place where Mrs. Blake and Constance stood, and informed the elder lady, in reply to her request preferred during their former interview, that neither she nor her younger daughter would be required as witnesses on the trial.

‘Miss Blake will be wanted,’ he said. ‘I think I understood you to say that she is going to remain at Bayonne, so I shall not be so unfortunate as to have to interfere with your plans.’

Several polite speeches were exchanged, and the ladies went down-stairs.

‘I am so glad that is over,’ said Constance. ‘What should I have done if they had wanted me for the trial? Mr. Bertram must have come back, and we could have been married here; but Honiton lace is dreadfully dear here! It is really a mercy they did not want me!’

The whole of that afternoon was spent in purchasing and packing finery. Honor remembered afterward that at dinner-time Charlie had asked a great many questions about the trial, which he at first thought was over, until Honor explained to him that this was only a prelimin-

ary examination ; and that he was particularly curious as to what would be done to Monsieur le Souffleur if he were convicted. She did not pay much heed to this at the time, as she was nerving herself to ask Conny some questions.

It was like probing a wound, but she did it ; and found out that Constance and her mother were to stay with Mrs. Bertram at Twickenham for a fortnight or more, when the marriage would take place ; and the happy pair, after a very brief honeymoon trip, would return to the house of the bridegroom's mother for the remaining short period of their stay in England.

'Spencer's mother wants him to be with her during the last few weeks,' said Conny, 'and it will be nice for me. They go into very good society, and I shall like to be near London to get my outfit.'

'When do you leave England ?' asked Honor.

'Sometime in November. I hope I shall not be sea-sick on the voyage !'

The next morning Constance, Charlie, and their mother left Bayonne. Honor's heart smote her for not feeling more than she did at

the parting from her sister. Conny was not at all affected by it.


Some days later Honor received a letter from Mrs. Blake informing her of their prosperous journey. Charlie they had left at Bordeaux, to proceed thence to Rochelle by a coasting steamer. Their passage across the Channel had been wonderfully fair, and Mr. Bertram had met them at Dover. The writer expatiated warmly on the kind reception Conny's future mother-in-law had given to her visitors, on the evident satisfaction with which she and his sisters had been introduced to his choice, and on the 'elegant style' in which Mrs. Bertram lived.

'They would not have liked an ugly bride so well, I daresay,' said poor Honor, with a great pang, for which she chid herself severely. She was never, *never* going to think on this subject again.

She resumed her tuitions, and when at home devoted herself to Newton and Emmy; and, by active performance of all her duties and constant hard work, sought, not without success, to deaden, if she could not cure, the pain in her heart.

CHAPTER VI.

HONOR TELLS THE WHOLE TRUTH.

NE evening as Honor was returning from her pupils, she had taken the omnibus as far as the lane which led to the garden gate, and on alighting from it she found herself face to face with Mr. Tom Tracy.

‘I was just coming to see you all,’ he said. ‘So Conny, is gone away to be married!’ Honor had compelled herself to write that news, though she feared in a very cold, forced manner, to Lady Tracy.

‘How is Newton?’

‘Not at all well. He has been suffering from one of his bad nervous attacks lately. I am obliged to leave him and Emmy alone all day; but I do not like it.’

‘ I shall be able to sit with him a good deal while I am here.’

‘ Why are you here ? How is my aunt ?’

‘ Wonderfully well. She bore the journey to Brighton, as I wrote to you, better than I hoped, and since then Isabel gives very good accounts of her.

‘ I saw her last Sunday. I ran down for a few hours, and I thought her certainly better. I have had to come over here about this wretched business of the forged cheque. They sent to take my mother’s deposition in the proper form, and she was so much vexed about it all, especially as she feared you might be annoyed by the affair, that I offered to give my evidence in person, though I do not know what I can say in the matter, except that no one but a fool could have accepted that as my mother’s signature. Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur must, it seems to me, be either knave or fool, though, if he forged the cheque, he is both, as the imitation of my mother’s signature is most clumsy.’

‘ You do not think *he* forged it ?’

‘ Who else could have done so ? My mother feels sure the cheque-book never was out of

her possession, except the day she left it at the bankers'. You remember she lost the key of her desk before she left Anglet ?'

' Yes.'

' Well, this key never has been found ; so when I joined her at Paris, I got her a new cheque-book, and this one (taking it out) has lain in the desk till now. She had a duplicate desk-key in her davenport in Westbourne Terrace. As soon as I went up to London I got it out, and we opened the desk. You see this cheque-book is just as she left it. The last sum drawn is "forty pounds," with your name below, and the date a week before she left Anglet.'

' That was the money she gave me to enable me to go to Cambo.'

' I know. Well, she never touched the cheque-book afterwards. But here, further on, you see a leaf has been cut out completely, so that it might easily escape notice. My mother says she cannot tell when this was done—certainly not by her.'

' Oh !' cried Honor, and she stood still in the road.

‘What is the matter?’

‘I have just thought of such a dreadful thing!’ Then she told Mr. Tracy how she had seen Charlie meddling with the desk.

‘And the forged cheque,’ she said, ‘is signed *Honner*, as Charlie always persists in spelling my name!’

‘You do not mean to say you think Charlie—’

‘I cannot say what I think! I must tell you Charlie is not always truthful.—Oh what shall I do?’

‘Do not distress yourself like this,’ said Mr. Tracy. ‘You have no evidence against Charlie. The fact of his touching the lock and denying it is nothing. There is a vast difference between telling lies and forging. Many a boy of his age does the former without being thoroughly bad. What would have put such an act as the other into the boy’s head, and what could he have done with the money?’

‘I fear, I fear!’ said Honor; ‘he had several French companions here I never liked. Oh Charlie, Charlie!’

‘Let us walk round the garden,’ said Mr. Tracy. They had entered the gate now.

‘Let us walk round before we go in where Newton is, and talk of this quietly. Where is Charlie now?’

‘At Rochelle—at school; that is,—oh, do you know I am so frightened when I remember that Monsieur Guichaud has never written to tell mamma of his arrival. He always writes when the boys arrive at school. We have often laughed at him, for he always says the same thing in such a pompous way. Mr. Tracy, what am I to do?’

‘As far as your anxiety about Charlie’s whereabouts goes, I will set that at rest by a telegram as soon as I return to Bayonne, and I sincerely trust you are distressing yourself without cause. You have mentioned this to no one but me?’

‘No; I never thought of it till you spoke of the loss of the key.’

‘Then be sure you do not.—And now I want to ask why I am to be called *Mr. Tracy*?’

Honor looked up and reddened, but could make no answer.

‘I thought,’ he went on, ‘it was agreed tacitly between us, when you behaved like the

best of daughters to my mother, that we were to be like brother and sister. If I presumed too much on this, and asked for something more, Honor, do not let it break up our friendship. Let me be a brother to you now. You may want one, even in the very case before us. You need not fear my saying anything that will vex you,—that your brother might not say, if you will forgive and forget, and come back to the old terms.'

'How kind you are to me!' was all she could say.

'Then that is a bargain. We are to have no formalities between us. And now I want to say what many men I suppose would think me a great fool for saying, but I cannot help it. You are looking very ill and unhappy, Honor. Is there anything I can do to serve you? *Anything*, mind. I must speak plainly; can I set anything right, or help you at all about your engagement? Answer me as sister to brother;' and he took her hands, standing before her.

'Nothing. I am telling you the truth. You can do nothing.'

‘Is it a question of money? Forgive me for tormenting you.’

‘No; indeed it is not. I would answer frankly if you could help me.’

He let go her hands with a sigh.

‘Well, I hope you would, Honor. I hope you do not think that I could weigh my own happiness against yours, or rather that my first desire is not to see you happy. There are few things I would not suffer to secure that.’

She could not even speak her thanks, but she thought he understood them without words.

After a few minutes’ silence, he said—

‘Let us come into the house and see Newton.’

Newton was not at all well that evening, and was excessively irritable. Even the presence of Mr. Tracy, whom he had always liked, did little to cheer him.

Mr. Tracy asked Honor if he should not send the doctor back from Bayonne. He did so, and the medical man looked rather serious over Newton’s ailment.

‘Your mother told me,’ he said, ‘that your brother has more than once been attacked by

fits. He is threatened with the same thing now. You must keep him very quiet, and on no account let him be agitated, or even, if possible, vexed.'

He then gave Honor a number of general directions, to which she promised faithful obedience, and left saying he would call again the next day.

Newton went to bed early that evening. Honor was engaged in his room for a long time, and then she sat down to write to her mother, while Emmy was learning her next day's lessons beside her. Emmy's education had been not a little neglected during her sister's absence.

The arrival of Mr. Tracy interrupted them. He talked about Newton as if he had come to inquire for him, and then chatted to Emmy, looking at her books ; but after a few minutes, he said—

'Can you talk to me alone on business, Honor ?'

'Go to bed, Emmy dear,' said her sister.

Emmy bid good-night and went away, and then Mr. Tracy said—

‘You were right, Honor : Charlie has never reached Rochelle.’

Honor groaned.

‘I telegraphed to Monsieur Guichaud, and received the reply that he had not arrived. Can he have gone with your mother to England?’

‘I fear not; here is her letter.’

Mrs. Blake said distinctly that she had left Charlie at Bordeaux to proceed to Rochelle. This was nearly a fortnight ago.

‘Can anything have happened to his steamer?’ said Honor.

‘I thought of that,’ replied Mr. Tracy, ‘and I have ascertained that all the Bordeaux and Rochelle steamers have been running regularly as usual. The only hope is, that he has after all gone with your mother.’

This Honor knew was not the case, for Mrs. Blake, in her last letter from Twickenham, had given Honor a message to send to Charlie.

She brought out her mother’s letters and showed them to Mr. Tracy, and she told him of Charlie’s conversation that last day at dinner, now invested with significance; then they both sat silent for a while. At last he said—

‘It does look as if he had run away, Honor. But as far as I can learn, no one suspects him in the least.’

‘I must tell, of course,’ replied Honor.

‘Yes; if you are asked.’

‘Whether I am asked or not. I cannot let an innocent man be blamed unjustly!’ And she rose up, whether with some vague idea of going that instant to the Juge d’Instruction, she did not herself know.

‘How do you know he is innocent?’

‘I have no doubt! No doubt at all! Do not stop me, Tom!’

For a minute an unworthy suspicion entered Mr. Tracy’s mind. Was this man accused of forgery, this Monsieur le Souffleur, the betrothed lover, for whose sake she had refused him?

‘Why do you care so much about Monsieur le Souffleur?’ he asked.

‘I do not care about him particularly. I rather dislike him, because he spoke so unkindly of dear Edith Bertram. But that is no reason why I should not do him justice.’

The clear eyes looked into his face so truthfully, he hated himself for his doubt.

‘ You shall do justice to him, Honor; but you must do justice to Charlie too. You have no *proof* of *his* guilt; appearances are, I grant, against him, but I have known much stronger circumstantial evidence arrayed against an innocent man. You have no right to go into court to denounce your brother as guilty of this forgery, and you must not do it. You must trust in me, Honor, as your nearest male relative capable of acting for you. You are summoned as a witness at the trial ?’

‘ Yes ; it is to be the day after to-morrow.’

‘ I know,’ said Mr. Tracy. ‘ I may tell you, Honor, if I could have stopped proceedings by paying the money, I would ; but I find that is not to be done. There is no stopping it, except I were to swear that the cheque was signed by my mother.’

‘ That is out of the question.’

‘ It is ; particularly as I deposed this morning, before the Juge d’Instruction, the writing could not be mistaken for hers by any one with eyes. If Charlie did sign that cheque, how could he have received the money ?’

‘ Through Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez ;

he may have given it to her as from us, and received the money from her in the garden on her return.'

'And she, I hear, denies all knowledge of how many cheques she cashed, or to whom she gave the money. It is strange you should all have trusted such a very ignorant old woman with large sums.'

'Every one hereabouts used to trust her with money. She is so perfectly honest, and she never lost a franc. I do not think *we* often asked her to carry large sums, because my mother prefers doing business of that sort herself; but I understand people doing it. A thousand francs in silver or gold is very heavy to carry in one's hand.'

Honor remembered the last she had brought home.

'Then you think this woman is honest? She could not have forged the cheque?'

'She can neither read nor write.'

'Is there any one likely to be her confederate? Pauline? My mother's servants?'

'Poor Pauline, I am sure she would not do such a thing! Antoinette, the maid your mother

had, was a very respectable woman, and well educated. She writes a much better hand than that in the cheque. The cook was a Basque, and could not write.'

'That may be.'

'Besides, I know neither of them could have had access to the cheque-book.'

'We cannot be sure of that. They are sure to be called as witnesses, I suppose?'

'Yes; Pauline has been summoned. She and I hardly know how we can both leave Newton.'

'Call Pauline, and let me ask her some questions.'

Honor did so.

Pauline's whole anxiety regarding the trial seemed to be centred in the question of who should attend on Newton during her own and Honor's absence. She rushed into that subject as soon as Mr. Tracy asked her if she was to be a witness.

'My mother would come, Mademoiselle, gladly, but she is not well. She has been ill for the last week. Will Mr. Newton bear with my old aunt for one day? She is deaf, and a

little stupid it must be confessed, but she is clean, and not a bad cook. She will prepare the meals and do what she can, and Made-moiselle Emmy can manage the rest.'

'Thank you, Pauline. That will do very nicely. Will you ask her to come? It may be only for a few hours.'

'A few hours! Parbleu!' Pauline said. She would not be too sure of that. Once those judges and lawyers got together they talked generally till hunger made them leave off. When next those gentlemen wanted to forge she hoped they would do it all among themselves, or people who, like themselves, had nothing else to do, and not call honest girls away from their work for nothing!

Mr. Tracy, seeing a good opportunity, here remarked that the judge could not tell who the guilty person was without witness from honest people.

'Bah!' replied Pauline. 'They know well enough, I daresay. At anyrate they know it was none of us.'

'How can they know that?'

'How could it be, I ask you, Monsieur?' said

the girl. 'La Mère Quinqualeronvontroyez—the young man says he gave her the money. La Mère, she forgets—how could she remember? She cannot prove him false. But the whole country knows the Mother. If she received it, she gave it up faithfully—and to whom? Why, to whom but me? I always took the commissions from her with my own hands; and that last week Miladi your mother was here, Monsieur, I took the commissions for both houses, for, as Mademoiselle knows, La Mère will not leave her ass, and one must go outside the door to speak to her. Then Miladi's cook and the Mother had a quarrel in the summer, because the cook hit Monsieur Coquin a blow. So they were not very good friends, and the Mother refused to take the commissions from her at any time. Mademoiselle Antoinette had the toothache very badly that last week, and she begged me to give the commissions for her to Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez. I did so; therefore, if that young man says he gave the money to the old woman, it is the same as saying he gave it to me!'

'You do not seem much afraid of that?'

Pauline laughed.

‘Not I! I never had a hundred francs of my own, and could not easily have spent a thousand without the knowledge of the neighbours. *I* never play billiards, or lose money at cards! —Mademoiselle, I shall call my aunt to-morrow.’

Pauline retired.

‘That woman is, I believe, perfectly innocent,’ said Mr. Tracy. ‘Did you understand her last remark?’

‘No.’

‘It seems that the accusation against Monsieur le Souffleur is partly grounded on his having lost money at play lately. He may be guilty.’

‘I suppose it is wicked, but I wish I could think so!’ sighed Honor. ‘At anyrate I must tell all about Charlie and the key.’

‘You must not be rash. You must promise me, Honor, that at first you will only answer such questions as you are asked.’

‘Very well. But if the case goes against Monsieur le Souffleur, I shall tell all I know. You must not ask me to be silent then.’

‘I shall ask you to do nothing so contrary to

your own nature, for I know it would be useless,' he said, looking at her with a sad admiring gaze, which, with the implied compliment in his words, passed quite unnoticed by Honor.

She answered simply, 'Quite useless.'

He rose and held out his hand.

'Good-night. I will see you to-morrow.'

'Good-night. Oh Tom! I wonder where poor Charlie is!'

'I wish I could tell you; but we must wait till this trial is over before we institute any search.—By the way, you must say nothing of this to Newton.'

'Of course not.'

'Nor in writing to your mother.'

'No. Mamma will be home next week. Oh, what will she say?'

Mr. Tracy's heart ached as it had hardly ever ached before. Why could he not spare her some of this! He could say nothing except 'Good-night, again.'

'Good-night, and thank you.'

The morning of the trial came. Honor had never closed her eyes during the preceding night.

Mr. Tracy was filled with such tender pity when she came into the room where he stood. He had come to escort her to the court.

Her face was deadly pale, with large dark circles round her eyes, which shone with almost unnatural brilliancy. The expression of every feature, of every movement, showed the terrible struggle within—the struggle in which her resolution to tell the whole truth never once faltered.

Newton was still in his room. He was vexed at his sister and Pauline being obliged to leave him for a whole morning, and said he should most likely not leave his room that day.

Pauline was running to and fro in a bustle, loading her aunt, a very deaf purblind old lady, of obtuse intellect, with directions as if she were confiding the household to her for at least a month.

‘Sit down ; sit down, Mademoiselle, and eat your breakfast ; we have plenty of time. Sit down, Monsieur Tracy.’

‘I have breakfasted, thank you,’ said Tom. ‘Make Honor eat something, Emmy. I will go up-stairs and see Newton.’

He did so, and came down just as Emmy rose from the table.

‘I will go to Newton now,’ she said. ‘I will not forget anything, Honor. I will give him his medicine every three hours, and his soup at twelve o’clock. You have not eaten anything, Honor.’

‘I cannot, thank you, dear. Good-bye.’

The little girl kissed her sister, and skipped away in answer to Newton’s bell.

‘Can you not take some coffee, Honor?’ said Tom.

She shook her head. The anguish stamped upon her face quite unmanned him. Why had he not the right to catch her in his arms and put his love between her and all her troubles now and for ever? Such love as his ought to be able to soothe, if it could not keep away, all earthly trial. Where was the man who had come before him in her heart? Why was not he here to support her? Where, indeed! Poor Honor had no need to ask herself that question, for this was Conny’s wedding-day; and at the very time when Mr. Tracy led Honor, pale and miserable, but strong in her high resolve,

through the crowd at the door of the court, and to a seat set apart for her by the politeness of the *huissier*, the marriage procession, with its bridesmaids and bouquets, its well-dressed smiling friends, its white satin, Honiton lace, and orange flowers, gathered before the altar in that church at Twickenham, where stands the monument to the memory of our great cynic, and Spencer received his lovely bride from the hands of a bishop, assisted by two clergymen of lower degree.

We will leave them to go home to the breakfast and the speeches, while, praying pardon for any mistakes I make through ignorance of French law, I relate to the best of my power what took place on the trial of Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur, accused of having forged the name of Honor Tracy on a cheque.

The evidence against him was stated. He had cashed the cheque, apparently without in any way comparing the signature with that of others previously presented in that lady's name. He had, he averred, forgotten to enter the date or to whom he paid the money; but when this was brought to his notice by his superior in the

office, he had said it was paid to Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez.

It could be proved that Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur had some time before been in possession of Lady Tracy's cheque-book for half an hour or more. This was proved by several witnesses. There was also evidence that he had, about the time of the forgery, been involved in some gambling debts, and his means of paying these did not appear. He asserted that he had subsequently won money at cards, more than what he had lost, but this was not satisfactorily proved.

Mr. Tracy gave his evidence clearly and briefly, though in somewhat Anglicized French. His mother always kept her cheque-book in her desk, which was locked. He knew that his mother always carried the key of that desk about her person, for two reasons—the desk was an old and favourite one, and to the key was attached a seal she greatly valued.

His mother had informed him, when he joined her in Paris, that she had lost this key, so the desk was not again opened till he returned to London and took the duplicate key from an

escritoire there. He had opened the desk himself, and found the contents in their usual order. The cheque-book now produced in the court was there. He did not believe he should have noticed that a cheque was cut from it in a place apart from those which had been taken out in the usual way, had not the news of the forgery induced him to examine it.

Mr. Tracy was asked if his mother had ever told him where and how she lost the key.

She had said she believed she must have dropped it on the sands at Biarritz, where she had been walking some hours before she discovered the loss. She was greatly vexed at her loss, and had searched everywhere as soon as she found it out.

‘What were the other contents of the desk?’

‘Writing materials, some packets of letters and receipts, and ten English sovereigns.’

‘The latter were not touched?’

‘No; nothing appeared to have been touched.’

Lady Tracy’s written deposition agreed with this.

Then Honor was called.

She did exactly what she had promised Mr.

Tracy—answered all questions put to her, and nothing more.

After her examination had elicited all she had previously told the Juge d'Instruction, she was asked if Lady Tracy had told her of the loss of the key, and said 'Yes.'

If she had assisted to look for it ?

'Yes ; unsuccessfully.'

'If Lady Tracy had said where she thought she might have lost it ?'

'Yes ; she said she might have dropped it on the sands, or that she might have packed it up in the pocket of the dress she wore that afternoon.'

'Did she not do the latter ?'

'No.'

'Did she ever tell you anything more about it ?'

'She told me afterwards she had found that the pocket of that dress was torn, and believed the key had fallen from it.'

Honor awaited the next question. She thought it would be whether she herself had any suspicion about the fate of the key, but she was told to sit down, and Madame Quinquale-

ronvontroyez was called. The old Basque nearly drove the judges, jury, procureur-général, and lawyers mad, while affording great amusement to the crowd.

She began by simply declaring her inability to remember anything alone—while Coquin stood without.

‘Coquin! Who is Coquin? Why is not Coquin called on for his evidence?’ said the Judge. ‘Send for him at once.’

‘Coquin is her ass, Monsieur!’ replied the *huissier*, trying to look grave. Everybody else laughed, after which the judge sternly told the old woman she must answer the questions put to her without any such mockery of the court, on pain of punishment. So threatened, La Mère Quinqualeronvontroyez prepared herself to answer, and her questioner, seeing the hard task before him, tried to make his interrogations as simple as possible.

Had she ever brought money for the English family living at Anglet from Monsieur Jarny’s?

‘Yes; often and often. She had brought every sou! Mademoiselle Pauline, Mademoiselle Antoinette, Miss Blake, and every one of them

knew she had brought it all to them! She steal!—Coquin, my son, we bring back every centime—always!’

‘You are not accused of stealing, my good woman. Try to answer clearly what I ask you now. Who used to give you the papers in return for which you brought this money?’

‘Who? Everybody!’ She could not remember *who* in particular.

‘Who gave you the money at Monsieur Jarny’s bureau?’

‘He,’—pointing to the accused.

‘And to whom at Anglet did you give it?’

‘To all the family—to whoever took my commissions! How can I remember? I always carried it safely!’

‘How much did you bring at a time?’

‘Sometimes one sum—sometimes another. Whatever they told me.’

‘How often did you fetch such sums?’

‘How often! Whenever they told me!’

‘That is no answer. How often?’

‘I cannot remember.’

‘Once?’

‘Oftener than once.’

‘Twice?’

‘Yes; perhaps so.’

‘Three times?’

‘Perhaps so.’

‘Three times?’

‘Perhaps so. I know nothing. Very likely twice—very likely three times. I cannot tell. If I had my cordons it would be another thing. Coquin knows I cannot count without my cordons!’

‘Is she mad?’ said the Judge. ‘What are her cordons?’

A neighbour of the witness explained, at the desire of the court, that the old woman was in the habit of carrying knotted cords, by which she remembered her commissions.

‘It seems to me she is a most extraordinary commissionnaire!—one who cannot remember anything,’ said the Judge. ‘Can she not write?’

‘Write! No. She cannot count above twenty.’

‘Impossible! How can she be trusted to carry large sums of money?’

‘She counts by twenties, with the help of her cords—so many five-franc pieces up to twenty,

then so many twenties. She never loses anything, nor forgets a commission.'

'She forgets very readily afterwards, apparently,' said the Judge.

Nothing more satisfactory could be elicited from the old woman.

Then Lady Tracy's former cook was called—then her other servant, Antoinette—then Pauline.

The cook could give no witness of any consequence, but the evidence of both the latter, especially of Pauline, told strongly against Monsieur le Souffleur.

Antoinette deposed to Lady Tracy's constant habit of keeping her desk locked; and Pauline roundly averred that if Madame Quinqualeron-vontroyez had brought any money that last week she would have given it to *her*, as she had taken the commissions for both houses, and that she had never brought a franc subsequent to the cheque cashed for Honor.

The forged cheque was without a date; but the day Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur had, when first questioned about it, said he had cashed it, was the day before Lady Tracy lost

her key. Therefore it seemed impossible that the loss of the key could portend any one having meddled with the desk, the more so as the sovereigns in it were untouched.

In vain the counsel of the unhappy young man said that, not having entered the payment at the time, he had perhaps made a mistake in the date.

Everybody thought him guilty, and the Judge was about to speak, when Honor stood up :—

‘May I say something?’

‘Certainly, Mademoiselle.’

‘I believe—I am nearly sure,’ she said, ‘I know who took Lady Tracy’s key.’

‘You know, Mademoiselle! and who?’

Honor’s firmness nearly forsook her then. She trembled so much she had to sit down, and turned so white the *huissier* brought her a glass of water.

Mr. Tracy was about to come to her side, but she looked at him to stop him.

‘Let me speak now,’ she said, in English.

‘Take your own time, Mademoiselle,’ said the Judge, ‘and speak sitting where you are. Do not distress yourself more than you can help.’

Every creature in the court was moved at the sight of the girl's mute distress—her white rigid face, and at the tones of her forced voice.

Pauline and Antoinette wept aloud. Several female spectators did the same, but the Judge called out for silence when Honor began to speak again, and then you might have heard a pin drop.

‘It was my brother—my youngest brother,’ she said ; and she related all the reader already knows.

‘Is it not possible you were mistaken about him?’

‘I fear not. His face was not toward the window, but I knew his hat—an English sailor's straw hat. The signature of the forgery is like his writing, and spelt as he always spelt my name. I believe Monsieur le Souffleur is innocent.’

‘The fact of the cheque being so clumsily signed, and without date, points to a young or uneducated person,’ said the Judge.

This point had not been omitted from notice by the prisoner's counsel, but it had been concluded by the prosecution to be only stronger

proof of Monsieur le Souffleur's guilt, as he could not, they maintained, have accepted such a clumsy forgery without knowing it, and had most likely counterfeited the clumsiness to divert suspicion from himself. Now the whole tide of opinion had turned, and it was wonderful to see how differently people viewed all facts from what they had done a few minutes before.

Honor was asked several questions as to all she knew or suspected against her brother, and as to his flight; but she needed no cross-examination.

She laid everything open so evidently, without reservation, no one could suspect her of collusion with Charlie's flight, or any knowledge of his crime previous to the time when, she herself said, it had burst upon her with sudden conviction.

The court shrank from asking for Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez again; but Pauline was called upon for further evidence. During the two days that elapsed between Lady Tracy's departure and Charlie's return to school, had she always, as before, taken the commissions from the Basque messenger?

Pauline hesitated, looked lachrymose, and confessed she had not.

On one of those days she had gone to Cambo to prepare for the family removing there. She did not know who received the commissions on that occasion. 'La Mère' might know.

If La Mère did she would not tell. She was, if possible, more provoking than the last time. The court dismissed her in despair.

Pauline was then asked if Charlie had ever seemed to be in possession of more than an ordinary amount of money.

The girl began to cry—looking at Honor.

'Answer *the truth*, Pauline,' said her young mistress.

'Yes; he had given the boy who cleaned the shoes a five-franc piece before he went to school.'

The sum was not large in itself, but seemed to Pauline more magnificent than the means of schoolboys in general allowed.

Where was the boy who cleaned the shoes?

Jean Detrop was called.

He confessed, with some apparent unwillingness, that he had received presents from

Monsieur Charles, and Monsieur Charles had on that day told him that his aunt had given him a large sum of money, and that he meant to buy a sailing boat of his own and go excursions to the coast of Spain.

Had he during these subsequent holidays possessed any money, or any expensive purchases?

Pauline averred frankly she was sure he had neither. Honor could not say, as she was from home; but Jean Detrop deposed that the young gentleman had told him he had stopped at a café in Bordeaux on his way to school, and there been induced to play several games, at which he had lost all his money.

This last evidence, taken with all that had gone before, was conclusive.

Monsieur le Souffleur was pronounced innocent, and a writ ordered to be issued for Charlie's apprehension.

'It is my painful duty, Mademoiselle,' said the Judge to Honor, 'to order a prosecution to be instituted against your brother.'

'Of course, Monsieur.'

'At the same time, let me assure you that

every member of this court, as well as every person present, is struck with admiration at your truly generous conduct. I am sure I am speaking a sentiment which is universal, when I say I should sincerely rejoice in any discovery, any *dénouement*, which would remove the blame of this action from one of your family. If your brother is indeed guilty, his bitterest punishment will be the pain he has caused to so excellent a sister.'

Every one present applauded; but Honor heard it all as one who hears not.

'Take me away, Tom,' she whispered to Mr. Tracy, who came to her side as the Judge rose.

He led her to the carriage his forethought had provided for her that day, through the plaudits of the crowd who cheered the brave 'demoiselle Anglaise.' They were stopped at the door by a white-haired gentleman, evidently suffering from deep emotion. With him was Monsieur Adolphe le Souffleur.

The elder gentleman said, bowing to Honor, 'We have come to thank you, Mademoiselle. I am his father. No words can thank you enough for your generosity.'

‘I feel it the more, Mademoiselle,’ said his son, ‘as I was once so unfortunate as to incur your anger.’

‘Miss Blake is not one to remember such things in a case like the present,’ said Tom. ‘She thanks you for your kind words; but she is, as you see, worn out, and little able to talk.’

‘Pauvre petite! may the good God comfort you!’ said the old gentleman with feeling.

Honor tried to bow her thanks.

Mr. Tracy put her into the carriage, and stepped in after her. Pauline, wiping her eyes noisily, mounted the box, and they drove to Anglet.

Mr. Tracy carried her into the house and laid her on a sofa.

‘Get her something to eat quickly, Pauline. —Emmy, take off your sister’s boots;’ and he himself unfastened her bonnet.

Pauline’s aunt had not belied her culinary reputation, and the girl soon appeared with a basin of excellent ‘bouillon,’ with which Mr. Tracy fed Honor as if she had been a child. He did not leave her till she was much re-

freshed, and able to go to her room with some hope of sleep.

‘Make her go to bed at once, Emmy. She has had a most fatiguing day,’ he said.

Then he went to Newton, dined with him, and sat with him for some hours, till the invalid boy was cheerful, and even reconciled to Honor’s long absence.

It was late when Mr. Tracy returned to Bayonne, and all the bureaux were closed, but he drove at once to the residence of the senior partner in Monsieur Jarny’s firm, and paid to him the thousand francs Charlie had unjustly obtained from that bank.

Monsieur Jarny demurred. His firm owed a good deal to Honor, he felt, and it did not seem fair, in any way, that Mr. Tracy should pay for his cousin’s fault.

Mr. Tracy said, as the fault seemed to be that of one of his family, and it was, no doubt, partly also that of his mother for having kept her key insecurely, he could not be easy without making good the loss.

Monsieur Jarny, with another courteous protest, assented. He felt that as the Englishman

was so eccentric, and no doubt so rich, it could not matter to *him*, so he would be a fool to refuse further.

Mr. Tracy was not so very rich, but he knew that it would console Honor in some degree when he told her the bankers were not losers by Charlie's crime.

'She could not have borne the constant sense of mortification otherwise,' he said to himself. 'Besides, it will help to make friends for her, poor dear!' and so this very silly young man paid away forty pounds for 'an idea,' and went to bed ever so much happier for having done so.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUANT'S RETURN.

THE next day was Thursday. Had it not been so, Honor felt she could not have attended to her pupils. Miss Morris had taken them for her the day before, and sent her a message to the effect that she could easily continue to do so till next week.

Of course she, with the rest of the world, knew all that had happened in the court, and she felt it most likely that Honor would need rest. The note was left at Anglet after Honor went to bed, and Mr. Tracy would not let Emmy disturb her.

It was brought to her in the morning by Pauline.

That was a weary morning's waking. When I said a little time ago that the most acute of

mortal sufferings come from betrayed trust, I ought to have excepted the stings of self-reproach, and these poor Honor felt at this moment as nearly as one so pure-hearted could. It was true she had done what was right,—the only thing, in fact, she could do ; but not the less did the bitterness of it having fallen to her lot to denounce her own brother, to disgrace her family, to grieve her mother as she had seldom been grieved before, probably to cause Newton renewed illness by the vexation he must feel when he knew all,—not the less did this weigh on her.

When Pauline brought her the note from Miss Morris, Honor saw the girl was weeping, and her heart leaped to the dread of some new misfortune with the readiness of credence in disaster that those in trouble always feel.

‘What is the matter, Pauline ?’

‘My mother, Mademoiselle ! she is so very ill. My brother has just come to tell me. Sister Justine is with her, and they have sent for the priest. Can Mademoiselle do with my aunt another day while I go home ? She is still here.’

‘Certainly, Pauline. I can spare your aunt too; you know I shall be at home all day. I am so sorry for you, poor Pauline! Do not delay, and take your aunt with you.’

Pauline shook her head. ‘My aunt is my father’s sister. We shall not want her at home now. Thank you much, Mademoiselle;’ and she left the room.

Honor dressed herself quickly, but when she went down-stairs she found that Emmy had forestalled all arrangements for the comfort of the household in Pauline’s absence in a way that was quite wonderful in a child of ten.

Honor remembered herself at that age—how different she was, she thought, as she watched her sister’s busy little figure flitting about the hearth and breakfast-table, from whence she had just carried Newton his morning meal, prepared exactly as he liked it.

It was a wet and stormy day without, but the bright fire shone cheerfully within, and even Honor’s sadness could not keep her from smiling her thanks at Emmy’s efforts to make her comfortable.

Just as they were about to sit down to break-

fast some one was heard struggling with the outer door, and then shaking off a wet overcoat in the passage.

It was Mr. Tracy.

‘What a morning it is!’ he said. ‘I have come to ask you for some breakfast, and dinner too, if you will let me stay.’

He stayed with them all day. Newton came down-stairs after breakfast, and was unusually cheerful, and much pleased with Mr. Tracy’s society.

Of course his presence and Emmy’s prevented conversation about poor Charlie; only Mr. Tracy told Honor in private of his visit to M. Jarny, and also that he had to return to England the next day, and would then use every means to discover Charlie’s whereabouts which would not also be likely to end in the boy’s apprehension.

‘Even if he were taken, Honor, it would be better for him to stand his trial than to be a life-long fugitive.’ But of this Honor would not hear.

Mr. Tracy must never, she said, do anything that could lead to Charlie’s detection, or, if he

discovered him, persuade him to give himself up. She *could not*, she declared, *could not* bear yesterday's evidence again against her brother, were he being tried.

'I should refuse to speak at all, however they might punish me for it,' she said ; and Mr. Tracy knew she meant it.

'The police here are of course searching for him,' said Mr. Tracy, 'but I doubt their success. Ships to all parts of the world are continually sailing from Bordeaux.'

Neither Mr. Tracy nor Honor knew that all the Bayonne officials were willing, in consideration of the sister's generous behaviour, to deal as leniently with the brother as the claims of justice demanded. It was due to this feeling that Mrs. Blake was suffered to return home unmolested by telegrams regarding her son's escape ; and *perhaps* the police search was not as rigid as Mr. Tracy believed.

Even high officers of the law are mortal, and it is possible that, with all the abhorrence they must have felt for Charlie's crime, these gentlemen, themselves fathers and brothers, may not have been immensely anxious to bring to the

galleys a lad of fourteen, whose sister had, at the cost of such suffering to herself, been the only witness against him, and whose family had reimbursed the losers by his forgery.

It was not to be expected that Mr. Tracy and Honor should know this. Had they done so, my tale might be written otherwise than it is.

At mid-day there was a gleam of sunshine, and Honor took advantage of it to run over to Pauline's house, and ask after her mother.

The poor woman was fast sinking, Sister Justine said. 'I shall call to tell you when it is all over,' promised the Sister.

Honor's heart was heavy for Pauline. Her sympathies were always too large for any suffering of her own to check their overflow.

When she found she could do nothing to help Pauline she returned home. The afternoon closed in stormily; Newton went to bed, Emmy followed him, and Mr. Tracy was lingering over his farewell words, when Sister Justine entered.

'Elle est morte, la pauvre femme!' she said; and went on to give Pauline's message, that if she could be spared till after the funeral, she

should be very grateful. Honor assented willingly, and then Sister Justine spoke of Honor's conduct the day before.

'I have heard that all the town is ringing with your praises, my child.'

Honor shook her head, and the tears came into her eyes. She could not bear to have praise for that.

'I understand what you feel,' said Sister Justine in reply to the mute protest. 'I understand that you did not do this for praise, and that such seems even painful to you, purchased, as it were, at your brother's cost. Nevertheless your action was noble exactly in proportion to the pain it cost you. As for your poor brother, he is a boy—a mere child. Let us hope that you will soon hear of his safety in some distant spot, where his penitence may expiate his youthful wrong-doing.'

Honor was about to answer, when the outer door of the house being suddenly pushed open, the blast of wind that entered threw the door of the sitting-room open also, and nearly puffed out the lamp.

Honor rose to shelter it, and Mr. Tracy to

shut the door, when, ere he reached it, Charlie entered, dripping wet, and begrimed with coal-dust, carrying his small school-portmanteau in his hand. Honor was so startled, and so little able at the moment to bear any shock, that she sat down again in her chair very faint. It was Sister Justine who sufficiently retained her presence of mind to shut the door and inquire of Charlie whether any one had seen him come in.

‘Not a soul,’ cried Charlie. ‘I never saw the streets and roads so empty as they are to-night. I wanted to get a boy to carry my portmanteau, for I was dead done up with the voyage in that collier, but I could not see a creature.—What is the matter, Honor?’

‘Tell us what brings you here first,’ said Mr. Tracy.

Charlie’s story was soon told. He had, following his love of adventure, and pending the time of his own packet sailing, gone on board a Rotterdam steamer lying in Bordeaux harbour, and as he could not speak a word of Dutch, he had found himself considerably at a loss what to do when the vessel left before he thought of returning to the shore. Afraid of he knew not

what if he explained his mistake, he quietly paid his passage-money from the funds he possessed, and when he landed in Rotterdam made inquiries in vain for some vessel bound for Rochelle.

If he had been older he might have gone to the British consulate for assistance; but, in place of this, acting on the advice of some sailors he met in a café, he pawned some of his clothes, and with the proceeds took a deck-passage to Liverpool, and thence in a collier to Bayonne.

To none of his shipmates had he confided anything of his name or reasons for so travelling.

Nothing in Charlie's words or manner gave any reason to suppose he had been knowingly flying from justice.

It was sad work telling the boy the truth,—that in his absence his sister had denounced him as a forger, and the police were on his track.

Honor's tender heart broke down altogether in the attempt. Never was that description of love,

‘Strong as death,
Yet as a reed to break,’
more entirely verified than in Honor Blake.

She could have borne martyrdom for those she loved without a complaint; but to inflict pain *on them* tried her powers of endurance beyond their strength.

Sister Justine drew her into the next room to prepare for Charlie's bodily wants, first replenishing the fire, and while Charlie changed his wet clothes, Mr. Tracy told him all that had happened during his absence.

Charlie was very indignant. 'I never even touched your mother's cheque-book, Mr. Tracy. I swear I did not! What right has Honor to accuse me?'

'Was it not you then she saw at the desk?' asked Mr. Tracy.

Charlie faltered, and confessed he *had* touched the desk. When he returned that evening from Biarritz he had missed his pen-knife, and, searching for it in Lady Tracy's drawing-room, had seen the key in the lock of the desk. 'I had always wanted to look at that key, it was such a curious shape, and I tried to turn it. I never meant to break it, Mr. Tracy.'

'I know you did not. Go on.'

'When I broke the key I thought every one

would be so angry, it was best to say nothing about it—so I put it in my pocket, and the next day I threw it in the Nive.’

‘And you denied to Honor having seen the key?’

‘Yes; I knew they would all make such a row about it. But Honor had no right to say I *forged*. I never did that.’

‘My dear fellow,’ said Mr. Tracy sadly, ‘have you not yet learned that no man knows the end of a lie? Your sister never asserted you forged the cheque. She said she saw you touching the desk, and that you denied it to her. The judge and jury drew the conclusion that you were the forger.’

‘She had no business to tell.’

‘She had—every business every honest man or woman has to tell the truth, when to conceal it would cruelly injure the innocent.—And now Charlie, let me say a word to you: I have no wish to trample on any one who is down; I have already paid that thousand francs for you, and I will do whatever else I can to see you through this business; but on one condition: you must not reproach your sister; she

has already suffered terribly by the necessity, caused entirely by your falsehood, of bearing witness against you, and if you say one unkind word to her I will leave you to your fate.'

'I will not,' said Charlie; 'but I am innocent of the forgery. Honor might have known that.'

'How could she? Remember, it is your own want of truth in the first instance, that has fastened this suspicion on you. Now bear in mind my words when you see your sister, and, if you do so, trust me to help you in every way I can.—Shall I call Honor?'

Meantime the two women, busy preparing supper for the truant in the kitchen, long since deserted by Pauline's aunt for her bed, had conferred together, and decided on their action, as women will do, while the men are taking the evidence.

'He has come here unaware of his danger?' said the nun.

'Yes, oh yes; it is terrible!—Dear Sister Justine, keep our secret and help him to escape.'

'Of course, my dear child; of course—but how?'

‘But how?’

‘Mr. Tracy leaves to-morrow for London; your brother must go with him.’

‘Alas! every one at the railway knows my brother well; the earliest train leaves in broad daylight; the police will telegraph for him before he reaches Paris.’

‘He must assume a disguise.’

Honor meditated.

‘Last winter,’ she said, ‘when we acted charades, Charlie, in my clothes, was so like me, every one thought it was I. He was then not so tall as I am, but we are just of a height now. He shall leave Bayonne disguised as me.’

‘Very well so far; but where will you be meanwhile?’

‘I must hide. Could I hide in the convent, Sister Justine?’ The last words said after a pause, and tremulously.

‘That is it, my child!’ cried the nun. ‘I have the key of that row of empty cells. I will put you there. No one shall know of it except my confessor, and when we hear your brother is safe, you shall return home as from abroad.’

Honor embraced the Sister. At that moment



Mr. Tracy called, and they both returned to the sitting-room, carrying Charlie's supper.

'I am innocent of that forgery, Honor. I told you a lie about the key. I broke that, but I never opened the desk,' said Charlie to his sister.

'I knew you did not, darling!' replied the young lady, falling on his neck, somewhat to the surprise of Mr. Tracy, who could not forget that he had heard her, not thirty-six hours before, assert an exactly contrary belief.

Mr. Tracy was a great novice in the sources of feminine convictions.

'Oh Tom,' sobbed Honor, 'how can I ever undo the harm I have done Charlie?'

'I do not see how you can blame yourself,' he replied; 'you deposed what you saw, and what you believed.'

'Yes; but that was my own stupidity. Now I have heard the truth from Charlie himself, of course I see how wrong I was.'

'I fear you will not get the judge and jury to change their views so rapidly.'

'That is the dreadful thing! You think they will try him for the forgery, even if I go and tell them the truth about the key?'

‘ I am sure they will.’

‘ Then, Sister Justine, he must escape,’ said Honor in French, to the nun, who had not understood much of the previous conversation, which Honor now explained, and, while Charlie ate his supper, the two ladies divulged their plan to the astonished Mr. Tracy.

In vain Mr. Tracy suggested Charlie standing his chance in a trial.

Honor would not hear of that, and Charlie himself, rendered timid, possibly by the consciousness of his own untruth about the key, leant strongly to his sister’s view.

With regard to Jean Detrop’s evidence, Charlie confessed it was, in the facts, true. His aunt had given him fifty francs, of which he had bestowed five on the boy, and had boasted of his riches, without stating their amount. Also, he reluctantly allowed he had lost that money at play in a café at Bordeaux.

Perhaps Mr. Tracy did not feel quite so sure of the boy’s innocence as Honor was ; perhaps he could not refuse *her* anything ; anyhow, he consented to forward Charlie’s escape, in the manner suggested.

‘You will send him to Australia to Phil?’ said Honor.—‘Your innocence will be proved some day, Charlie, I know.’

Mr. Tracy did not ask how, seeing she absolutely vetoed the public trial of his innocence, she could hope that this end would be attained. Still less did he attempt to understand how these two women, both of exceptionally pure hearts and high-toned morality, though at variance in their religious tenets, both devoted to law and order in its strictest form, and who would, as regarded themselves alone, have obeyed the authorities set over them to the uttermost, were thus prepared, by common accord, to circumvent the judicial executive of the country, and break the laws with entire disregard of punishment if discovered, by assisting a suspected criminal to escape. I suppose the fact that he was excessively in love with one of his persuaders will plead some excuse for his yielding, when no doubt strict justice demanded the surrender of poor Charlie to the police.

By the way, I doubt whether Mr. Tracy would have loved Honor so well as he did had her heroic devotion of the day before extended

to the point of abandoning her brother to trial. It was the true womanhood that could vindicate her enemy at her brother's expense, and now defy the law to save that brother, which tightened her hold on his heart.

Once agreed on their plan of action, the little group of conspirators soon arranged the details. Honor brought a suit of her own clothes, and dressed Charlie in them. Sister Justine declared the deception perfect. 'Farewell for the present,' she said; 'I will myself open the door for you five minutes after midnight—wait outside the convent till I come.'

'It is well Pauline is away,' said Honor; 'had she been here we must have confided in her; but her aunt will never know Charlie from me in the morning.'

'And Emmy?' asked Mr. Tracy.

'Emmy must not see him. I will awake her now, and tell her I am going from home, but that she must not rise so early. She will obey me.—Now Charlie, come to Conny's room, and sleep there, while I pack your things in my travelling trunk, and some of Newton's clothes also for you.'

Mr. Tracy followed her into the passage.

‘Do not pack up anything of Newton’s, Honor. I will see Charlie furnished with a proper outfit in London; you must trust all that to me.’ Honor put out her hand, and grasped his warmly. It was all the thanks she could give, for her voice was choked. She went upstairs, and awoke Emmy with some difficulty, explained to the sleepy child that she was called away by sudden business, and that Emmy must soothe Newton, for whom Honor left a note on her table, and keep house till her mother’s return.

‘May I not get up in the morning to bid you good-bye, Honor?’

‘No, dear; I particularly do not wish you to do so. You understand me, Emmy? You must do what I tell you.’

‘Certainly, I will.’

‘Then lie in bed till your usual hour to-morrow. Newton will probably be very angry at my absence, but you must bear it, and try to cheer him. Mamma will be home on Tuesday, I hope. I leave a note for her also, and one for Miss Morris about continuing my pupils.

I shall not sleep in this room, dear, so good-bye. One thing more, Emmy, a telegram will come to *you* from Mr. Tracy to say that "the books have been sent." Will you be sure to take it to Sister Justine as soon after you get it as convenient ?

'If I cannot go myself, shall I send it ?'

'No ; take it yourself ; give it to no one but Sister Justine. Do you understand this, Emmy, and will you do it ?'


'Yes,' said the child ; 'I suppose those are the books you wanted for the school.'

'Never mind ; I know I may trust you with all this, Emmy ; one day I may tell you my reasons for going away. Now you will believe me, my darling, that I would not desert you without good reason.'

'Of course I do ; but, Honor dear, when will you come back ?'

'Very soon, dear ; on Wednesday, most likely—certainly before the week is over, I hope. Good-bye, my darling ;' and carrying her trunk with her, Honor left the room.

She placed the remains of Charlie's belongings in her trunk, packing over them so many



of her own clothes as would disarm suspicion were it opened by any accident, or at the English Custom-house, arranged Charlie's morning toilet in readiness, removed all trace of his supper from parlour and kitchen, then took a tender farewell of the boy, and descended to the drawing-room, where Mr. Tracy had declared his intention of passing the night.

'It would not do to leave Charlie here alone, lest some accident occurs which might result in discovery,' he said. 'But let me walk with you to the convent.'

'No, no. I must go alone, as quietly as possible.'

'I cannot bear to send you out alone on a night like this.'

'It will do me no harm. I have this cloak, and dry shoes in this bag in my hand. I cannot say my thanks to you, Tom.—Good-bye!'

'Good-bye, Honor. You may trust Charlie to me. You may trust me always that there is nothing I would not do for your happiness.'

He lifted her hands in both his, and kissed them tenderly, then led her to the door and watched her pass out into the dark stormy

night, with such vain longing to spare her that and all other pain and trouble for ever.

Honor passed along the muddy lane and water-laden road, dreading even the sound of her own foot-falls.

She stole like a thief by the shortest path—that past the ‘abattoirs,’ which at any other time she shunned most scrupulously. Now the darkness that wrapped the spot spared her eyes, but there was much to revolt her other senses had she not been too much absorbed to heed it.

Swiftly and silently she hurried on to the convent gate.

She had not been there many minutes before midnight sounded from every clock in the city, and soon after Sister Justine opened the gate, led her in darkness and silence through some corridors and into a cell, where she lighted a small candle.

‘You can sleep here, I hope, my child,’ pointing to a rough pallet. ‘Here is food for to-morrow, and I will visit you again at night. Have you dry shoes? Yes.—Is there anything else you want?’

'I forgot I should have to stay here all day, and I have no work or book.'

'I shall bring you a book, a good book, to-morrow. Meantime you can pray. Good-night.'

She locked the door, and Honor was left in darkness and solitary confinement.

A great ordeal it must be to even the best of us.

Pure in conscience, blameless in her memories of the past as Honor was, those long night-hours were very terrible to her.

They possessed a peculiar horror, all their own, apart from her suspense about Charlie's fate. Nor was the next day, with its dim light barely piercing the cell-window, and enforced idleness, much better.

'I must be very wicked, or I could follow Sister Justine's advice, so that it would calm me,' she said, as the afternoon waned and she found herself shuddering at the fear of the darkness coming again.

With the night, however, came Sister Justine. She brought good news. She had heard from more than one quarter that *Honor had left*

Bayonne by the Paris train that morning— probably to meet her mother, people said. Sister Justine had walked to Anglet and seen Newton and Emmy. The former was at first very angry at Honor's sudden departure, Emmy said, but had not been worse in health than usual, and Pauline was to return to her duties the next day.

Sister Justine had not forgotten the book—a devotional one of course. Honor could make no use of it that night, but the next day it afforded her reading for several hours, and thought for more.

Honor's Christianity was of that large and genuine kind which separates the wheat from the chaff instinctively.

Because there was much in Sister Justine's book she did not agree with, this did not close her eyes to the excellence of the rest.

That night was not so bad as her last; but another and another grew very wearisome.

Her mother had returned, she heard from Sister Justine, but the Sister had not been able to go to Anglet, and had not seen Emmy since.

Honor grew very anxious at not receiving the

telegram which was to be the signal for her liberation. After she had been imprisoned for a week, it came.

Emmy told the Sister it had arrived two days before, but her mother had not allowed her to go to Bayonne till to-day.

‘Mamma said she thought the books could not matter,’ said the child ; ‘and she is so anxious about Honor.’

Honor was too glad to be free again to fear her reception at home much. As soon as dusk made it safe she slipped from her cell, with Sister Justine’s help, and joined the crowd outside the railway terminus just alighted from the last Bordeaux train. Then she hastened homewards with a light step, not heeding the surprised glances of one or two acquaintances she met.

Pauline saw her first as she came up the garden walk, and ran into the house to Mrs. Blake, who began to cry as soon as she saw Honor, and to reproach her for deserting Newton, who ever since his mother’s return had, by his anger against Honor, encouraged by Mrs. Blake, been working himself into so much

excitement he was now really ill. Poor Emmy had had a hard time of it, as she had been severely and continually scolded as Honor's coadjutor in what Mrs. Blake called her 'flight.'

'It is all over the town,' cried her mother, 'that you went off with Mr. Tracy! Pauline's aunt says he came here last Thursday, and never left till he took you away on Friday morning; and Monsieur le Bœuf asked me if you were not going to pay that money you borrowed from him; and there is some dreadful story I can't understand about Charlie. They say you said *he* forged that cheque, and that he has run away from school. I only heard it to-day, and I wrote to Monsieur Guichaud at once. It is too bad, Honor! I thought I could trust you at home.'

Honor took her mother aside and told her the whole truth.

Mrs. Blake was very angry with her daughter for accusing Charlie, but being most anxious for his escape, agreed no one else must know the story.

'Especially not Newton. He is so angry at

what they say of you, he would tell on poor Charlie at once.'

'What they say of me!'

'Yes. Did I not tell you? They say you went off with Mr. Tracy.'

Honor turned sick, and grew hot and cold alternately.

'I suppose it will be all right now they see you have come back. At any rate we must keep Charlie's secret.—Poor Charlie! has Mr. Tracy never written about him?'

Yes; Mr. Tracy had written. The letter had arrived for Honor that morning, and was lying on the table.

It told her that her brother was safely embarked on board an Australian ship, and enclosed some cheerful lines from Charlie himself, expatiating on Mr. Tracy's kindness, who had given him a first-class passage, a good outfit, and twenty pounds.

Mrs. Blake was somewhat consoled by this, though she naturally felt very grieved at the boy having left Europe without a farewell, and under such sad circumstances.

Newton's state was irritating as well as some-

what alarming, and his mother vented this and all her other causes of trouble on Honor, whose fault she persisted it was 'from beginning to end.'

When Honor went to her room that night and read Tom Tracy's letter again, when she thought of his watchful unobtrusive devotion, his ever ready care for her, perhaps she felt that the greatest injury Spencer Bertram had done her was having caused her to refuse such love.

CHAPTER VIII.

HONOR LOSES HER FRIENDS.

EARLY the next morning Honor walked into Bayonne, to seek Miss Morris—to thank her for having attended to her pupils for so long, and to find out when it would be convenient to her to restore them to their own teacher.

Miss Morris lived with her mother in the Blakes' old apartments in the Rue Porte St. Martin.

Honor found her at home, just about to start on her round of tuitions. The young lady seemed rather surprised and embarrassed at Honor's visit, she did not ask her to sit down, but said, in a hurried, nervous way—

‘Certainly, Miss Blake; I am quite ready to give up all your pupils at once—to-day.’

‘Not to-day,’ said Honor. ‘Not till you can arrange about your own tuitions.’

‘I can do that at any moment.’

‘Then to-morrow, shall we say? It makes just a month since the holidays ended, of which we have each taught for one fortnight. I shall send you the money as soon as I receive it; and I need not, I hope, say how grateful I am, or that if you ever want any services in a similar way—’

Here Mrs. Morris came into the room. She was a true middle-class Englishwoman of the type one often meets abroad,—cold and blunt-mannered, and of painfully exacting respectability.

‘Miss Blake,’ she said, ‘it is my unpleasant duty to say that your visits to Margaret, and her communications with you, must stop at once. This must be the end of them. I am not ungrateful, and I know that Margaret owes it to you that she has got any pupils here, but I cannot let her good name be compromised.’

‘Please, mamma, do not say that,’ pleaded Miss Morris.

‘I must say it, child, for it is true.—You may be much cleverer than my daughter, Miss

Blake, and have grander relations; but a young lady who could leave home with a young gentleman, and stay away a week without her own mother knowing where she was, is not a fit associate for Margaret. I told her, just before you came in, she was to write to you, and give up your pupils at once. She has no wish to stand in your way with any of them. She told the nuns that yesterday. She was fond of you, Miss Blake, and feels grateful to you, so this has vexed her, therefore I am very glad you have come here to hear it from me. I mean no offence, but there are times when one must speak plainly.—Good-morning.'

Honor hardly understood what had passed, till she found herself in the street; and even then she was too bewildered to appreciate the full force of Mrs. Morris's accusation. What should she do next? It was striking ten, the hour for her lesson at the convent school, and as she believed Mrs. Morris had forbidden her daughter continuing these tuitions, she hastened there. As soon as she appeared in the school-room, she could not but be conscious that she was the subject of a great deal of whispered

remark among the young ladies, and that she was very coldly treated by the nuns.

She gave her lesson, and at its close was summoned to speak to the supérieure.

Poor Honor knew what was coming.

The lady expressed some surprise that Honor should have come that morning to her charge, knowing, as she must do, that the reports against her character made it impossible for her to be continued in her present situation.

‘They are false, Madame!’ cried the girl.
‘Believe me, they are all false!’

‘Then where were you during this last week?’

‘That I cannot tell; but I did no harm!
Sister Justine knows I did not!’

‘Sister Justine has already said as much to me, Mademoiselle. One so holy as Sister Justine thinks the best of everything. She professes her belief in your innocence, and if it can be proved, no one will rejoice more than I shall. Be advised by me, Mademoiselle! Take counsel with your friends that you may clear up this cloud round your reputation!’

‘Mystery is an evil thing in such cases. The innocent never fear the truth.’

‘The reputation of a young girl is a thing too tender to be trifled with. Nothing but the whole truth, and that proclaimed instantly, will save you; and in the meantime I cannot, in justice to those ladies who have confided their daughters to my care, permit you to continue your lessons.

‘I have the pleasure to hand you your month’s salary, Mademoiselle, and to assure you that I shall be happy to employ your services again, as soon as this affair is satisfactorily cleared up.

‘I ought to tell you that your countrywoman Miss Morris, to whom I have spoken on this subject, is quite averse to continuing the tuition at our school. She says she feels it will seem like depriving you of your pupils, and that she owes you much, and must not be ungrateful.’

‘She is not ungrateful,’ said Honor. ‘Give her the lessons, Madame, in my place.’

‘Then you reject my advice to make known the truth?’

‘I cannot help it, I fear,’ said Honor; and with a few words of leave-taking she went away.

There were other lessons due to other pupils,

but she could not face any more rebuffs that morning.

She sought out Sister Justine, and to her poured forth her tale.

‘I feared as much some days since, my child,’ said the nun; ‘but I shrank from telling you. What will you do?’

‘You advise me, Sister Justine.’

‘Your mother is your best adviser, my child.’

Never before in her life had Honor felt the *full* bitterness of being without a mother’s love. She hid her face for a minute, then lifted it, calm, but tear-stained, and said—

‘My mother will never wish what would compromise Charlie—nor should I. How does the law stand in his case?’

‘I know little of the law,’ said Sister Justine; ‘nor is it safe to ask, but I believe that by what is termed an extradition treaty, criminals can be recalled from any part of Her Britannic Majesty’s dominions to be tried for felonies committed in France. I am not sure; ask Mr. Tracy. As regards myself, my child, I am willing to suffer any penalty to clear you. I know *he* will say the same.’

‘As regards yourself?’

‘Yes, my dear; I know I have broken the law by abetting your brother’s escape, so has Mr. Tracy; but do not think of us. The penalty to you, be it what it may, will be less than the loss of your good name.’

Honor sat silent for a long time. At last she said—

‘I have made up my mind, Sister Justine; I am going to bear this calumny.’

‘And you will be rewarded, my child! You are fulfilling the highest office poor human nature can assume—that of vicarious suffering: the innocent for the guilty!’

Then Sister Justine went on to speak words too solemn to be written down here, and Honor turned home by the disgusting abattoirs—‘the best road for one who is ashamed to be seen,’ she said to herself.

‘Mon Dieu!’ said Sister Justine, looking after her (I give this common French expletive here for the first and only time, because in Sister Justine’s words was no irreverence: she *meant* it),—‘Mon Dieu! what a Sister she would make! I have always said so. She

must one day return into the bosom of the true Church. I see it all: these trials will drive her there.'

Of trials poor Honor had enough and to spare in the next few weeks. Guided by her characteristic love of truth, she wrote to each of her former pupils, asking leave to renew her lessons; and from nearly all she received the same answer, disguised in different forms. Madame Bréguet's daughters had had chicken-pox, and she would not press their study of English at the moment, but enclosed the amount due to Miss Blake, with a thousand thanks. She engaged Miss Morris for her girls the week after.

Madame le Jeune was about to leave home, and must therefore forego Miss Blake's services for the present.

Madame Collet spoke out, and said she considered Miss Blake's late conduct absolved her from her engagement.

One or two ladies who had only boys to be taught continued to employ Honor, but in such a manner that only the remembrance of her debt to Monsieur le Bœuf enabled her to bear it.

The bitterest drop in her cup was when she visited the Le Bœufs. Louise did not appear; her husband said she was out, but Honor saw her at the window. The grocer was generous enough about the loan—said he would trust Honor till she could pay it; but he gave her no word of friendship, and seemed very uncomfortable, and eager to get rid of her.

Only two people, Sister Justine always excepted, showed her the smallest kindness in this crisis. Monsieur le Souffleur the elder ran after her one day as she passed his house, protested his belief in her innocence, and offered her the free use of his purse, which, I need hardly say, Honor declined.

Monsieur le Comte de Trouvaille called soon after, and urged Honor vehemently to tell the truth to the world, as he knew she *could* clear herself if she *would*.

Poor Honor had to answer him so coldly as to imply she could not, but he left her protesting he knew it was only some of that 'generous obstinacy' for which her countrywomen were renowned.

From her mother Honor neither expected

nor received any sympathy. Mrs. Blake always assured her daughter what had occurred was entirely her own fault; and when Newton complained that his sister had disgraced them, the mother was so ungenerous, or so illogical, as to agree with him, quite ignoring that she knew the truth of the story.

For now Newton joined the cry against his sister. He vowed he would stay no longer in a place where his family had been so disgraced, and urged his mother to return to England.

Honor pleaded against this the expense, the loss of the pupils she still retained, the debt to Monsieur le Bœuf. In vain : Newton wished it, and therefore it must be.

Mrs. Blake was about to return with her family to London.

Her own quarterly income and Phil's remittance poorly supplied the funds for the coming journey. Monsieur le Bœuf's debt remained mostly unpaid. Honor had received very little from her pupils since the holidays, and that little had been shared with Miss Morris, to whom she had sent the money in a blank envelope.

She still owed Monsieur le Bœuf thirty pounds, and though she assured him, on her farewell visit, she would labour to pay this with the interest, she could see he did not more than half believe her.

He was polite—he could not be otherwise—but ‘Madame,’ for whom Honor asked in trembling voice to say farewell to, was, he said, ‘occupied.’

It was a cruel thing to leave that happy sunny home of the last five years as friendless as she had come there,—all the well-earned esteem, the loving intercourse gathered up during those pleasant hours vanished, as had the summer sunshine before November’s blasts.


Even Pauline’s trust in her young mistress was sadly shaken—that is, she believed the worst that was said of her, though, with the loose morality common among her class, she good-naturedly palliated Honor’s supposed fault by a remark which conveyed a deeper insult than anything else the poor girl had encountered. It was to the effect that ‘Monsieur Tracy,’ in spite of his ‘tournure Anglaise,’ was ‘joli garçon.’

When Honor heard Pauline plead thus in her behalf, she became nearly desperate. She was ready almost to sacrifice even Charlie, to clear her good name at any cost, but the remembrance of Sister Justine and Tom Tracy stayed her. They must never suffer for the aid they had so generously rendered to her and her brother. What the nature or extent of the penalty to which they had exposed themselves might be she could not tell, but *they* should risk nothing.

Meantime, of course, Mr. Tracy knew nothing of what poor Honor had to suffer. She had answered his letter about Charlie, but not his next; she could not, and he could find no decent pretext for keeping up the correspondence.

Lady Tracy's hand was still too weak to allow her to write. Perhaps she might never again be able to use it freely. Mrs. Robertson wrote several times at her aunt's desire to Honor, but the latter felt it was uphill work on both sides.

She could not pour out her heart to her old friend as of yore when a third person was to answer her letters, had even no other barrier



interposed itself now between them; but the last breach had never been quite healed, and there was much now which Honor could not tell Lady Tracy; and so it was rather a relief than otherwise when a hint from Isabel about being overburdened with her aunt's correspondence brought this spiritless interchange of letters to an end.

Her present troubles were not of a nature that she could confide to any one, and this caused some restraint even in her correspondence with Edith, who had not been well, and wrote rarely.

Altogether, Honor felt very lonely and deserted, when, under all the united misery arising from bad weather, bad tempers, want of money, and want of friends, the family arrived in London once more, just in time to spend a gloomy Christmas.

Honor felt she left one friend behind her,—Sister Justine. Their parting was very tender.

‘You alone believe in my innocence, Sister Justine,’ said the girl. ‘You will love me whatever happens.’

‘Farewell, my child,’ sighed the calmer nun.
‘I believe and hope I shall yet one day welcome you into the haven where earthly slanders will not hurt you, nor loss of earthly friendships grieve you.’

CHAPTER IX.

HONOR'S TROUBLES INCREASE.

'*She*, the holy one and weakly,
Who the cross of suffering bore,
Folded *her* pale hands so meekly,
Spoke with us on earth no more.'

LONGFELLOW.

MRS. BLAKE knew so little of London, that the neighbourhood of her comparatively richer connexions, the Bertrams, being out of the question, she bethought her of the house of Mrs. Spiggins in Albert Place, Islington, as a fitting temporary lodging. Things were very gloomy with the Blakes that winter. Honor tried in vain to find pupils, and when she roused her heavy heart to the task of finishing the novel of which Lady Tracy had spoken so hopefully, and sat up night after night to accomplish the work, to her not easy, of making a fair copy, it was only to find that

neither publishers nor magazine editors would receive it. It was returned to her politely, but without fail, till she grew sick of the attempt to sell it, and she asked herself again and again, the question so many women ask to-day: Why was not some profession, some means of employment, open to her sex? Considering the number of *men* who are daily in want of some employment such as Honor coveted, considering that the only occupations her own brothers had found were those for which her sex especially unfitted her—soldiering and Australian cattle-tending,—I will not say she was quite reasonable.

Perhaps had the learned professions, or the employments subordinate to them, been equally open to men and women, Honor Blake might have attained competence in one of them. She *might* have overcome the want of money, and want of interest, which now prevented her from engaging in any of the profitable walks of life which custom allows to her sex. I do not assert that in the struggle for daily bread, where all the aspirants are equally without friends to advance them, the strongest *physique*,

and greatest bodily powers of industry and endurance, will of necessity win, supposing the mental capacities of the competitors to be equal. The experiment will probably be tried during the next hundred years, so my great-grandchildren will perhaps be better judges of its wisdom than I can be.

Meantime poor Honor, with her mother, sick brother, and young sister, chiefly dependent on her for everything, found herself, like many a young man in similar case, without remunerative employment, but was so much happier than most men that she was able by her feminine facility for doing many small things to lighten in place of adding to the burdens of discomfort in their poor home.

There came two gleams of sunshine in that dark winter.

One was the tidings of the relief of Lucknow, and the name of Lady Tracy's son-in-law, Colonel Langston, among the survivors. How Honor's heart leaped with glad sympathy as she read this! She wrote at once to Lady Tracy, and received, some weeks later, a few kind lines from Mrs. Robertson, saying she

was taking her aunt abroad for the winter, but giving no address.

The other piece of good news concerned all the family. It came from Phil, whom Charlie had joined safe and sound.

Mrs. Blake now told Newton of this, and also assured him of her faith in Charlie's innocence, but she never let him know of the circumstances of his escape.

Phil was very glad, he said, to have his brother with him. He would now fulfil his long-deferred intention of buying and stocking a sheep-run for himself, in the care of which he and Charlie would need little assistance; but as this would absorb all his savings, and in place of receiving a regular salary as before, he would now be dependent entirely on himself, and it must be some time before his profits would begin, he hoped his mother could do without the money he used to send her, till his farm began to pay.

'I do not hesitate to ask you this, my dear mother,' he went on, 'because Charlie tells me Honor earns so much by her pupils, she has long contributed to your comforts, besides pay-

ing for his schooling. Now that Charlie will be no further expense to you, and Conny too is provided for, I hope you can manage pretty comfortably on your own income and Honor's earnings for a time. What I gain for myself I gain for you all, and please God, if my sheep turn out well, I may be a wealthy man in another ten years, or less, and able to keep you and Newton in luxury for the rest of your lives, and give Honor and Emmy something when they marry.'

Charlie had told Phil the whole truth about the broken key, and Phil said he augured well of the youngster's future, as he thought this lesson against falsehood would last him his life.

Charlie wrote in the same strain to Honor. Some conversation Mr. Tracy had addressed to him before they parted had been thought over by the lad on the voyage, and borne good fruit. He thanked Honor for all she had done for him, hoping she had not found her solitary imprisonment at the convent very unpleasant; and told her he had seen the evil of falsehood in a way he would never forget, that he meant never to tell another lie, but to emulate

Phil, whose reputation for honour and probity already stood high in the colony, and he trusted to Honor's love and cleverness to watch for an opportunity when she could clear his character of the stain of forgery.

Honor persuaded her mother, in reply to Phil, to acquiesce cheerfully in the temporary withdrawal of his assistance ; and also to say nothing of their real reason for leaving Bayonne. 'Newton wished it,' would be quite reason enough, and neither Phil nor Charlie was likely to know the difference the change had made as regarded the part of their income earned by Honor.

Mrs. Blake was always a considerate mother, except to her eldest daughter, so she agreed to write what Honor suggested ; 'though how we are to live I do not know,' she added.

'I may get something to do, mamma,' said Honor ; 'and at anyrate we must not stand in Phil's way.'

Something to do ! Day after day this seemed more hopeless, and their income was entirely insufficient to provide Newton with comforts, as it hardly supplied the family with necessities.

Honor lived on dry bread for weeks. She mended and darned, she parted with everything of value she possessed (with one exception, of which I shall speak hereafter), and she failed 'to make two ends meet.' Mrs. Blake wept, and spoke of writing to Phil for assistance. Honor knew that Phil, who had just bought his farm, and was, he owned, in debt for part of the purchase-money, could not help them without injuring himself, and dissuaded her mother from this.

The debt to Monsieur le Bœuf lay heavy on her heart all this time. At last, when the spring came, and brought no help, she resolved to apply to Lady Tracy. She walked to Westbourne Terrace. Emmy, who was wont to be her companion, had grown strangely weak and easily tired this last winter, so she went on alone through the streets, gay once more with their spring crowds, so strangely different now to her sobered womanhood, from what they were when she had first seen them as an ardent girl, to whom all life was new.

A man, who was not Lady Tracy's old servant, came to the door. 'Lady Tracy?' She

did not live here. The house was hers, but it was let for two years, he thought, and the owner gone abroad, he believed, but (he was very civil) one of the housemaids had, he knew, lived with Lady Tracy; he would call her.

The girl said her former mistress was abroad, she did not know where, with Mrs. Robertson, 'Miss Wedderburn that was.'

'And Mr. Tracy? Is he in London?'

Honor hoped she did not look confused when she asked this question.

'Mr. Tracy? Yes,' the girl said. He was in London, and sometimes called on her mistress, and had dined there three weeks ago. Should she give him the young lady's name when next he came?—he would know my lady's address.

'No, thank you,' said Honor. 'I am much obliged,' and then she went away so weary-hearted her limbs would not carry her home, so she had to get into an omnibus.

She used often to watch the crowds who passed her on the street, or before the windows of their lodging, for Mr. Tracy.

Once she saw him in Oxford Street, where

she had gone to make some purchase Newton fancied. He was talking to some ladies in a carriage standing at the door of Marshall and Snelgrove's 'Emporium.' She almost touched him as she brushed by in the crowd; but her natural shyness withheld her from speaking till the opportunity was past.

One day during that spring, Mrs. Blake met Mrs. Bertram (Spencer's mother) and her daughters. The richer lady was very friendly, came to see the Blakes, and invited Honor and Emmy to spend a long day with her at Twickenham.

Honor was sincerely grateful for the hospitality that brought fresh colour into her child-sister's cheeks, fresh smiles to her poor white lips. Mrs. Bertram, if a little formal and haughty in manner, was at heart warm and kind.

She idolized her son, and every one was welcome who could give her news of him. Honor had not much news from Brazil to give. Conny had never been fond of letter-writing, and seldom troubled herself with it now.

Spencer was also, Honor found out, very

careless in this way, and it grieved her not to be able to give his anxious, yearning mother more news of her son than the little Conny's meagre and few epistles supplied.

She wrote to Conny, begging her to correspond with them more regularly, and to make her husband write home oftener, if she could.

Mrs. Bertram continued to show the Blakes a good deal of kindness, till Honor one day presumed on it so far as to ask her Twickenham friends to help her to procure some pupils whom she could instruct in French.

Honor did not know, or had forgotten, the difference between the English and French estimates of such matters.

At Bayonne no one despised her for being a teacher. She was 'professeur' of English, and, like other professors, was looked upon as one following an honourable calling.

At Twickenham it was altogether different. The idea of 'Spencer's sister-in-law' being 'a daily governess' was intolerable to his family.

Not only did they make no effort to supply the pupils that, with little exertion on their part, they could have obtained for poor Honor, but

their visits to Albert Place, perhaps unconsciously, ceased altogether, and invitations to Twickenham became fewer and fewer.

After a time these also ceased, when the Bertrams went to the sea-side in the autumn, and on their return Honor did not see them again for many months, during which she had no thoughts to bestow on them.

For a new and great calamity was coming upon her, first indistinct and not to be credited, then with giant strides advancing nearer and nearer, plainer and plainer, though she strove not to believe in it, even when it had come.

Emmy had never thriven since her return to England. She had caught cold on the wintry journey home, and the rough fare and impure air to which she was now exposed had not enabled her ever to recover her strength.

When the second winter in London set in she was an invalid, confined entirely to the house, mostly to her bed.

Honor tended her day and night with that more than maternal care elder sisters sometimes show, and day by day Emmy's patience and sweetness endeared her more and more to the

other's heart. Now and then the child was better for a fortnight or so, and then Honor's spirits rose, only to fall again lower than before.

She had now obtained two or three pupils, from whom the remuneration was not large, but it began slowly to pay the debt to Monsieur le Bœuf. She religiously devoted all such gains to this end, until at length Emmy's weak condition craved her sister's earnings for additional comforts, and she broke her rule, not without reproaches from her own conscience, as well as from her mother, who said she might have done this earlier, to give the money to Newton.

Mrs. Blake and Newton were both so accustomed to consider him as the only invalid in the house, that they were disposed to be somewhat jealous of Honor's anxiety about Emmy, and to imagine at first that it was exaggerated beyond what the occasion required.

Honor never left her sister now, except for her pupils, and always hurried back as soon as the lessons were over.

For this end she used to take an omnibus from one of her most distant pupils' houses ;

and one day when she entered it a familiar voice struck her ear. She could not be mistaken, and, looking round, saw the dear old faces of Larry and Ellen M'Carthy. A City gentleman and a well-dressed maiden lady, who were the other passengers in the omnibus, believed they had fallen among mad people, and felt very glad when the drive was over.

How Ellen laughed and cried alternately over 'Miss Honor!' How they all lamented the ill-luck which had left them ignorantly living during the entire winter 'within a stone's-throw' of each other.

Honor unfolded her budget of news—how Conny was married and in South America; Charlie 'gone out to Australia to Phil;' and Newton and her mother 'much the same as ever.' But Emmy? Emmy was 'not quite well.' She had a cold and cough, and this wintry weather was trying. Honor for the first time in her life was so jealous against the truth she could not speak it—she would not even *think it*.

In his turn M'Carthy told his story. His sister Peggy was married to a thriving man in

Australia, and 'the old mother' lived with her. She had two children. He and Ellen had none—here the tears stood in Ellen's pretty eyes,—but her father and young brother and sisters lived with them, and were all flourishing.

M'Carthy had prospered in his exile, bought land in partnership with a fellow-countryman, and made some lucky speculations in wool.

This last summer events made it necessary that one of the partners should visit England on business, and M'Carthy volunteered to go. Ellen had come with him 'for a holiday,' he said, Judy and her father keeping house in the bush meanwhile. The date of their return was approaching; but it was lucky to have met 'Miss Honor' at last.

They had searched for Mrs. Blake in vain,—discovered her French address after some delay, and written there, but had had the letter returned through the Dead-Letter Office.

The Bayonne postmaster had been changed during the last year, and the Blakes' English address lost.

Ellen was so urgent that Honor should come into their house for a few minutes, the latter

could not refuse. It was not, as M'Carthy had said, more than a stone's-throw from Albert Terrace, but was in a newer and much better street.

The rooms occupied by the M'Carthys were handsome, and Honor now remarked, what she had hardly noticed before, how well Ellen was dressed, and how lady-like she looked in her rich silk dress and velvet mantle.

Otherwise prosperity had altered her little.

With her own hands, as in the olden days of homelier fare, she brought out cake and wine, of which she would have Honor partake, and, chatting away of all that had happened since they came to London, she said, setting aside a piece of cake—

‘I will take that down-stairs to Mrs. Black-wall, after a bit, Larry.’

‘Who is she?’ asked Honor.

‘She is a lady that lodges in this house, Miss Honor, in the back-rooms,—an officer's widow, poor thing, that has seen a deal of the world, and a deal of trouble, I am sure. But I don't think she will be in it long. She is looking a deal worse since the wet weather came. I

often sit a while with her, for she seems so lonely, the creature—neither kith, nor kin, nor friend. When first we got to know her, Larry tried to find out if she wanted money, but she told him no.

‘She had enough for her life, but she wanted a bit of friendship very bad, she said, and she was thankful for that. I sometimes take her some of anything we have I think she will fancy, for her appetite is nearly gone.

‘I have fretted to think what she will do after we sail; but I daresay, Miss Honor, you will come in and see her now and then.’

Honor said ‘Yes;’ but now she must go home to Emmy.

Mr. M‘Carthy—she called him that: Ellen blushed, and deprecated the title, but was evidently pleased—accompanied her to see Mrs. Blake, Newton, and Emmy.

He was greatly shocked when he saw the latter, and, though he spoke hopefully to Honor, he told his wife, when he went home, that the child was dying. When, however, Ellen called the next day she found the little girl better. One of those sudden changes that

make illnesses like hers so painfully deceptive had come on.

Ellen, who shared Honor's cares and vigils from that day, shared her hopes also; once even, one mild February day, Emmy went out to drive in a carriage hired by M'Carthy. This was the week before the M'Carthys left England.

When the little invalid returned, seemingly refreshed by the exercise, M'Carthy appeared to have something on his mind, which at last he forced himself to speak of to Honor and Mrs. Blake.

It was to the effect that, as Emmy needed many luxuries, Mrs. Blake must accept from 'her old servant' the means to pay for them.

With that he laid notes to the value of £50 on the table, and was about to run down-stairs, when Honor fell on his neck, and sobbed there, — 'in the most ridiculous manner,' her mother said afterward.

Before Honor had recovered herself, and by the time these true friends had left the house, Mrs. Blake had put away the money. She was really grateful to M'Carthy, and wrote a

nice little note to tell him so ; but she refused to allow Honor to use any of this money to pay Monsieur le Bœuf. They wanted it all themselves, she declared,—which was quite true. Honor had been introduced to Mrs. Blackwall during this time, and could not but be drawn in sympathy towards one whose wasting sickness reminded her of what Emmy *used to be*, she said, before she began to recover. Mrs. M'Carthy's description of Mrs. Blackwall was a just one,—a woman who 'had seen much of sorrow, and much of all parts of the world.

She had been with her husband, who, she told Honor, had risen from the ranks, in the Crimea, Canada, the West Indies, China, and India, during the voyage from which place he had died.

Honor often fancied she knew more of the world than even that garrison life could have shown her ; there was something in her voice and accent, in the bearing of her emaciated form, and her habitual manners, that made Honor sure her new acquaintance had originally belonged to a sphere of life higher than the highest to which she confessed.

Mrs. Blackwall liked Honor's visits, and took great interest in Emmy, which won the sister's heart. Honor readily promised to visit her often after Mr. and Mrs. M'Carthy were gone.

Every one in that little circle felt their departure deeply; but Honor was scarce left time to mourn the loss of her friends.

Before the Biscay waters washed the ship that carried them away, the Destroyer made his last onslaught. This time it was no feint; there were no deceitful retreats, no partial amendments: a few days of hopeless despair for the watchers, of cruel pain, borne with angel patience, for the sufferer, and all was over. Honor laid her sister in that cold suburban cemetery, and felt, as so many thousand others have done, and are doing daily, in that, and many like spots, that she had now no earthly wish but one—to lie down there too.

CHAPTER X.

GLEAMS OF SUNSHINE.

‘ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.’

THE members of the diminished family circle were drawn closer to each other by this last blow.

Both Mrs. Blake and Newton felt it deeply, and in the heart of the former there awoke something of motherly affection towards her remaining daughter, while they wept together over her who was gone.

This feeling did not last long, but for the time it comforted both the bereaved women.

As for Newton, now that he and Honor were left the last brother and sister by the family hearth, they seemed to have more in common than of old.

During those first days of mourning Honor opened her heart to her brother, and told him

the story of Charlie's escape, closely linked as it was in her memory with Emmy's docility and obedience—dear Emmy, who had gone to Heaven without the explanation her sister had promised 'one day' to give her.

Newton was greatly touched by what Honor had suffered, and found fault with her for not having sooner told him all. He was not easily persuaded to let the matter rest, but at length consented to do so.

Honor had wisely chosen that time for the disclosure. Face to face with the great reality death in our innermost circle brings before us, we are all less apt rigorously to weigh our own rights, more considerate of others, less heedful of the praise of men; and therefore Newton consented, as he certainly would not have done a year before, to keep Honor's secret, and allow her to bear that calumny rather than break faith with Sister Justine and Mr. Tracy.

Honor spoke the truth when she told him that to be restored to his esteem was a thing she valued more highly than what the outer world said of her.

In return, Newton resolved he would try to

be less selfish and exacting towards his sister. He did try—not with very large success, for habits cultivated from infancy are not easily given up, and great poverty is perhaps a worse school for such lessons than great prosperity; but Honor was thankful for even a little love now.

M'Carthy's gift had helped them through the expenses of Emmy's last illness, and left something for Newton's comforts; but when that was gone, Honor did not know what they should do.

She could earn very little, and all her earnings *must* go to Monsieur le Bœuf.

She still owed him more than half of the original loan, and she had resolved that nothing should ever again divert any of her receipts from this end until all was paid.

Nor was the news from Australia very encouraging.

Phil said an epidemic among his sheep had carried off a great number. He had a brave heart, and wrote hopefully of success being sure to follow renewed exertion; but meantime how were the family in London to live?

They changed their lodgings for others less

expensive, they reduced everything that could be reduced, and still their income was not sufficient for their wants.

Honor felt that in the event of *the worst* she must apply to Lady Tracy for help, but she would try her best a little longer first. She might get more pupils ; God would not forsake her, though most earthly friends seemed to have done so.

She had need of all her faith now, and it grew brighter with that need, as the stars shine clearest through the biting frost.

One day, some weeks after Emmy's death, she passed by the house formerly the M'Carthys', and reproached herself for having been of late too troubled and too busy to keep her promise of befriending Mrs. Blackwall.

She knocked at the door, and was told, in answer to her inquiries, that Mrs. Blackwall was very ill, but would be glad to see her.

Every day after that Honor used to spend some hours with this poor friendless invalid, whose strangely buoyant spirit made her society wonderfully agreeable, even while her sands of existence were visibly running out.

Mrs. Blackwall's conversation formed such a curious pendant, in Honor's mind, to that of Lady Tracy. They had both seen so much of the world,—of the same parts of the world too,—from such different points of view.

Sir Thomas Tracy had, after his Indian service ended, been Governor of that West-Indian Island where Mrs. Blackwall had lived in the barracks as a soldier's wife.

Honor sometimes forgot, as she listened to her new friend, how feeble the narrator really was, and used to fancy she would like one day to make Lady Tracy acquainted with her.

But such forgetfulness could not last long, and Honor's ministrations to both the soul and body of the dying woman were given tenderly and received gratefully.

'I wish I could do anything more for you,' she said one day. 'Is there no relation, no early friend I may tell that you are here?'

'No, none,' replied Mrs. Blackwall. 'I told you before I have no friends but you and the little Irishwoman and her husband who brought you to me. But I was thinking last night of one person to whom, if I could hope

to find her, I should like to tell that I am dying.'

'Who?'

'She is one whom I counted my bitterest enemy for many years. Now that I would forgive as I hope to be forgiven, I have thought she might have been more sinned against than sinning, and I should like to send to tell her so. But you could never find her. I have no time for hunting up lost clues now. I must keep what I have to say till she and I meet in eternity.'

'Tell me her name,' said Honor, 'and something about her. I may be able to trace her.'

'No, you will not. She may be dead. I have no trace of her to give you, except that her name was Edith Bertram, and that eight years ago she lived in Westmoreland.'

'Edith Bertram! A clergyman's daughter?'

'Yes.'

'She is one of my dearest friends.'

'She is alive? Where?'

'In Germany at present, with her father.'

'You know her history?' asked Mrs. Blackwall.

‘I do; and I implore you to tell me if you can give her any tidings of that—’

‘Hush!’ exclaimed the invalid. ‘I know what words you are going to use. You must not say those to me. *He*, the man you were about to call by evil names, was my husband—my first and last love. No one must blame him in my presence.’

‘Is he living?’ faltered Honor.

‘No, my dear; he is dead, or I should not be dying. I am sure I should have lived on, weak as I am, if my life could have served him longer. Now I can only follow him.’

‘May I tell Miss Bertram?’

‘Of what? Yes; tell her that on my death-bed I forgave her all wrong she unwittingly did me, and pray like forgiveness from her for myself and the dead.’

‘Will you give me some proofs of his death for her?’

‘Legal proofs? I cannot. He died under the false name I now bear.’

‘No. Proofs that would satisfy her morally.’

‘Why?’

Then Honor told of Sir Edward Wrexhill’s

attachment, and his and Edith's sorrowful parting. Mrs. Blackwall listened with bright, eager eyes, and parted lips, and when Honor ended, she fell back on her couch with a short laugh as of satisfaction.

'So she could love again! Now indeed I forgive her, and long to set her free! My darling! my darling! mine only now!—Make haste, Miss Blake; send for some one whom I can satisfy of his death, that she may be happy with her new love!'

Honor had still Sir Edward Wrexhill's address in London by her, and to it she wrote, asking him to come to see her.

He came the next day, and Honor took him to Mrs. Blackwall's lodgings, and at her request left them alone together.

He came out of the room all radiant, scarcely able to speak his thanks to Honor. He held in his hand two small morocco cases.

'These,' he said, 'and what Mrs. Blackwall has told me, will give Edith satisfactory proof that she is free. *This* I am to have photographed at once, and return. It is such an evident sacrifice to that poor thing to part with

it, that I shall not lose a moment, you can assure her.'

'It is a likeness of her husband?'

'Yes; and this other case contains a locket Edith herself gave that villain, which he, in real or pretended penitence, gave up to his wife; and some extraordinary feeling has made her keep it ever since.—What a remarkable woman she is! She seems very ill.'

'The doctor says she cannot linger much longer.'

'Poor thing! Does she want money? Want anything I can give?'

'No; she has a small pension, which seems enough for all her wants. If I find she requires anything, I will write to you.'

'Do so; and now once more, thank you, and good-bye. The moment I get this copied, I shall start for Wiesbaden. They are there now, I know. You shall hear from me from thence.'

Mrs. Blackwall was so restless till her miniature was returned that Honor came back in the afternoon to spend the evening with her.

Soon after her arrival the precious parcel

was brought in, and the sight of it soothed and calmed the invalid greatly.

She opened the case and showed her friend the portrait of a well-looking, but rather, as Honor fancied, selfish face; and then kissing it, and placing it under her pillow, she suddenly asked—

‘Should you like to hear the story of my life?’

‘If it will not tire you too much.’

‘No; I should like to recall it. I should, I think, like to feel that some one who sees my grave will know my real name and something about me—that I shall not die altogether among strangers.

‘My name is Julia Vaughan—Lady Julia Vaughan. I need not tell you what my maiden surname was. My brother, the present Earl, is a man so well known in England, and so justly respected (though they did cast me off, I can grant that), that I have no right, even to you, to throw disgrace upon him, by linking my story with his ancient name.

‘I was brought up like most other girls of my class—educated carefully, and given especial

facilities for studying the art, which, as I grew older, I loved above all others,—that of painting.

‘My family were very proud of my proficiency in this respect. My mother had died when I was a child; my two elder sisters married young; and my father gave me, as I grew up, a great deal of liberty to do as I pleased with my time and his money. My chief desire was to study my favourite art in Italy; and for this end, much to my sisters’ astonishment, I persuaded my father to allow me to forego the delights of my second London season, and proceed to Rome, chaperoned by an elderly widowed cousin. It was there I met Frank Vaughan. My cousin was not a strict duenna, and knew nothing about what was going on, till I told her I had engaged myself to him. Then she was very frightened, and assured me my father would never consent.

‘As for me, I hoped otherwise, but I was disappointed.

‘My father and brother, to whom I wrote, hurried over to Italy “to rescue” me, as they called it. In vain I dwelt upon my Frank’s

genius and goodness; in vain I showed them how, though poor, he too was well-born. They called him no softer name than a penniless adventurer, and made a breach by their violence that has lasted my lifetime.

‘I told them that they had snapped all ties of affection between us by their insults to my chosen husband. They did not believe me, and I went with them to England, meekly enough, for I could do nothing else, but I told them from the first I would marry him as soon as I was of age.

‘They made a demonstration of *forgiving* me. It was one of my sisters who urged them to such gentle measures, and she took me to stay with her, and gave me all sorts of pleasures.

‘I felt grateful to her, though I could not but laugh at them all for their shallow blindness. I told them I could never forget Frank. My sister said “Very well,” but that I must not talk of him to her. I did not, and she fancied I had forgotten him.

‘The day after I was twenty-one, I walked out of the house and married Frank Vaughan.

‘I came back and told them what I had done.

‘I expected anger, but I hardly expected my father to curse me,—my brother and sisters to tell me they held no further tie of kin to exist between us.

‘It filled my heart with joy to feel, when I returned to my loved husband, how little I cared for this, or anything else on earth, when by his side.

‘He cared more than I did. He was so generous, and so sensitive, that he felt, for my sake, the poverty that was our lot, and would hardly be persuaded how I gloried in it, when shared with him.

‘We had a great deal to bear those first years—a great deal of poverty and hardship, so trying to a fine spirit like his, which did not easily stoop to small economies or mean ways of life.

‘As for me, though I had been used to more luxuries in early life than he, I could not make him believe how utterly I disregarded such things now.

‘A child was born to us, and died. My

natural grief was overshadowed by such thankfulness that I had *him* left to me, I do not think I mourned as other women do for their first-born.

‘The world held but one life for me ; his presence would have made me happy in a dungeon. My heart could understand no real sorrow except that of losing him.

‘We had been married several years when better prospects began to dawn.

‘Frank received a commission to make a series of paintings of English scenery for a foreigner of wealth.

‘Money was placed at his disposal for his necessary tour, and I accompanied him. I used to help him in the rougher parts of his art, and always sat by him when he painted.

‘We enjoyed together some most delightful excursions to the loveliest parts of England, till one day our train ran into one laden with goods, and I was severely injured by the accident.

‘I was confined to my bed for many weary months after that, and lost my unborn infant ; but I was so thankful that my husband had escaped, I cared little for my own sufferings.

‘ As the summer wore on, however, it became necessary that he should leave me to follow his professional labours, and I sent him away gladly, because I saw that the confinement to my sick-room was telling on his spirits.

‘ He was always kind to me ; but it was not to be expected that, with his genius and spirit, he could, as a woman would have done, bear to become a nurse.

‘ He went to Westmoreland, and—Edith Bertram stole him away from me.

‘ I do not say it was her fault, but she did it.

‘ Why should any one blame him ? Was it his fault that he was born with an artist’s eye, and could not resist her beauty ?

‘ Was it his fault that his own wife was lying a wreck, from whom all power to attract had, for the time, departed ? It is easy for common organizations to fling evil words at such as him. If I do not blame him, no one else has the right to do so !’

She spoke the last words almost fiercely, and lay back exhausted. Honor begged of her to rest, and herself sat thinking of the words Mrs. Blackwall had used to excuse her hus-

band's falseness,—nearly the same as those Spencer Bertram had written when he revealed his own.

‘It must be that she has a power of loving very different from mine,’ mused Honor; ‘and yet I believe I could have loved my husband if I had been married—loved him perhaps whatever he did.’


Honor did not exactly discern wherein lay the difference between her and Mrs. Blackwall—how her affections, with all their depth and power of self-sacrifice, must always be subordinate to truth; how she could never, as Mrs. Blackwall did, have deemed wrong right because the loved one did it. She very little estimated the anguish *she* would have suffered in Mrs. Blackwall's place; in such case, Honor, bound by her duty, would have loved the wrong-doer to the end, but with such terrible agony of affection—the duteous love that has outlived esteem, joined to the truth which will not believe what is not is, though the refusal to do so involve mortal suffering.

Let those who, like me, love Honor Blake, rejoice that she was spared this supreme trial,

and had laid upon her, in its stead, the task of rooting from her own heart an affection which she could no longer righteously cherish.

It was impossible for any woman, with her well-disciplined moral nature, to continue to love the man now her sister's husband. Not the less bitter had been the anguish with which she saw her memories of Spencer drift away into the past; but she had had much to help her: chiefly that unflinching truth which, wherever duty did not command affection, could not let it long exist without esteem; and so the Spencer she had loved became, by insensible degrees, another from the Spencer of to-day. If there was added to this something of the contrast between true love and false, between Spencer's transient affection and Tom Tracy's unselfish devotion, influencing her heart, she did not herself know of it; but it was certain her late and present family cares did much to prevent her from indulging in sentimental repinings.

That rudely-broken dream had left her heart very sore, but no regrets now dwelt there that she was not in Conny's place. Some of these



thoughts passed through her mind, and made her contrast her own power of loving unfavourably with that of Mrs. Blackwall, when the latter began again:—

‘You must not think that I remembered all this at once. At first, I believe I was for a time mad.

‘Only one who has loved as I did, for whom life has held but one object, the world but one idolized being, can imagine my feelings when, in a provincial newspaper I met accidentally, I saw that my husband was married to another.

‘It seems strange that I can now talk calmly of that time. I used to say to myself that my woe was one for which time, the universal healer, could bring no balm, for he never could undo the past, never rebuild again, as before, the broken shrine of my soul’s idol-worship, and, without that, life would be to me only a desert.

‘I have lived to disprove that, to prove that even for such sorrows time carries an opiate. I do not say I ever was the same again—I suppose few of us after any great grief are quite the same as before,—but I can look back

and talk of it calmly, which I certainly never, in those first months, believed I could do.

‘ My first impulse, when I could collect my senses, was ungoverned anger, for which, before long, I paid a fearful price.

‘ I denounced my husband to the father of the girl he had betrayed before I reflected on what the consequences would be.

‘ I only remembered those just in time to save him from the hands of the law. Weak as I was, I hurried to him, and gave him warning of his danger, an hour before Mr. Bertram arrived to seek his daughter and avenge her injuries.

‘ Penitent too late, I fell at my husband’s feet, and implored pardon for my jealous fury, and the wrong it had done him.

‘ He spurned me from him, but allowed me to help to secure his flight, and I resolved to follow it, and watch all opportunities to make up, as far as I could, for the ruin my violence had brought upon him.

‘ He enlisted under the name of Blackwall in a regiment embarking for Canada.

‘ I entreated in vain that he would forgive me and take me with him, and his refusal drove

me beside myself, when a sudden fortunate chance saved me from despair.

‘One of the officers of the regiment was accompanied by his wife, for whom, as she was in delicate health, he had engaged an English maid.

‘This woman, at the last moment, shrank from leaving England. I was hovering about the barracks at the port of embarkation, and made her acquaintance.

‘I coaxed her to present me as a candidate for her place, which she did, making up some story about her own mother’s illness recalling her to her home.

‘Mrs. Ross was naturally unwilling to take a stranger with her, but I believe the maid assured her of my respectability, without any knowledge of the facts she asserted, and time did not allow of long hesitation; so I sailed to Canada in the ship with my husband, but ostensibly a stranger to him, and assuming the name of Jones, as one most likely to excite little question.

‘It was a strange life to me, as you may well believe; but after a time I came to find strange pleasures in it.

‘My mistress was extremely good-natured, and I grew to be fond of her in a certain degree. She was a pretty little woman, but, brought up in the country by Puritan parents, was without the smallest idea of how to show her personal graces to the best advantage. It soon became my chief amusement to do this.

‘My own taste in dress had always been pronounced “perfect.” In my arrogant girlhood I had prided myself on wearing nothing except from the hands of one or two *modistes*, queens of their art; and, in the straitened circumstances of my married days, I had, to please Frank, diligently studied the task of emulating their skill, by the help of my own taste, and with that regard to economy of material I was forced to study.

‘All this lore I now brought to bear on pretty little Mrs. Ross, till the transformation I effected in her appearance puzzled herself as much as her friends, and greatly delighted her husband.

‘For myself, the most sombre and unpretending of the cast-off garments she gave me sufficed my needs.

‘I had no longer any wish to look well, now that *he* was no longer to be pleased by it.

‘He remained obdurate in his refusal to forgive and acknowledge me, but at last softened so far as to allow me to ameliorate his lot by my earnings. I did not need them myself, for my mistress was generous and considerate, and I had the pure joy of giving them all to him, and of knowing that, besides increasing his comforts, they furnished him with the means of pursuing his art, which soon attracted notice among his officers, and made them see they had a man of superior nature to deal with.

‘Two years passed thus, and my husband had received a great deal of notice from those above him, and some promotion, which gladdened my heart beyond measure.

‘His regiment was ordered to a West-Indian station, and Mrs. Ross, fearing the hot climate for herself and her child, decided to return to England.

‘She quite believed I would accompany her, and the astonishment and disappointment with which she heard my refusal were great.

‘She made me large offers of increased wages, but, as you will believe, in vain.

‘I now once more urged my husband to acknowledge me as his wife, and take me with him to his new station. At last he consented, and soon after Mrs. Ross left we revealed our secret to Major Ross, reserving always our real name and the reason of my husband’s enlistment, and begging permission for me to join my husband in the barracks.

‘Major Ross, though vexed by my refusal to continue with his wife, was generous and good-natured. He at once carried our petition to the lieutenant-colonel commanding the regiment. This colonel had a wife who ruled him entirely, and who disliked Mrs. Ross, and me as her protégée, for reasons that seem almost too absurdly narrow-minded to be seriously related.

‘Mrs. Jennard was a woman who, in my eyes, possessed no single attraction, personal or mental. She was coarse in figure and feature, *loud* in voice, dress, and manner, and decidedly *ugly*.

‘But she had a power which often stands the possessor in place of solid good qualities—the power of self-assertion.

‘She set up to be a beauty: she announced by her manners, air, and dress that she considered herself one, and beauty being a matter of taste, and many people suffering their tastes to be much guided by their neighbours, it often happens in such cases that two-thirds of the pretender’s female acquaintances, and one-half among the men, end by believing her claim.

‘It is the nature of such women to be very jealous of rivalry, and this jealousy had been excited in Mrs. Jennard’s mind by the pretty face of Mrs. Ross, especially as she appeared when dressed by my skill.

‘She therefore hated my late mistress, and extended the hate to me, with unhappily the power to injure me.

‘She received with indignation her husband’s account of my real position—wondered he could dream of allowing *such a person* as I was to live in his barracks, and refused to believe in my marriage except I produced the certificate of it for her satisfaction.

‘Major Ross in vain urged that we were bearing false names, and that our own true one neither of us for family reasons wished to

divulge. Mrs. Jennard governed her husband absolutely, and she would not listen to any explanation.

‘The regiment left Canada without me. But I was not daunted.

‘Major and Mrs. Ross had been very generous to me, and I had enough money to follow my husband, and to set up a small milliner’s shop in the town where he was stationed.

‘I soon had plenty of customers, Mrs. Jennard herself among them ; but my life was not a happy one.

‘I still bore my feigned name, and was believed to be a widow.

‘I received several offers of marriage ; and my husband unfortunately becoming aware of this, got himself into trouble by assaulting a respectable shopkeeper who had paid his addresses to me.

‘Major Ross, who had befriended us steadily, spoke to me about my equivocal position, and advised a way out of it, which, though simple enough, had not occurred to either of us before.

‘We were married again under the assumed names each bore ; and after this Mrs. Jennard

was forced to withdraw her opposition to my living in the barracks.

‘ I could have looked upon that ceremony as a renewal of the tie so sadly broken, had not my husband, who chafed under the necessity for it, derided it as a “ humbug ” so bitterly that I felt very much ashamed of it.

‘ However, at last I was with him again, and that was enough for me. I have already from time to time told you all my subsequent adventures, I think.

‘ You know how my husband’s regiment before long was sent to the Crimea, and after that to India.

‘ I followed him in each case as closely as I could, and had the sad joy of being his nurse on two occasions when he was wounded.

‘ You know also how his good conduct and superior education gained him last year promotion from the ranks.

‘ I ought to have told you that though Mr. Bertram tried to keep his daughter’s misfortunes out of the newspapers, my family heard of the affair at the time it happened, and wrote, at once offering me forgiveness and a home,

on condition that I would never see Fran again.

‘This of course I refused, and so ended a intercourse between us.

‘When Frank obtained his commission, felt that he was once more restored to his proper rank in life; and we arranged that he should shortly retire on half-pay, and resume the practice of his former art.

‘I looked forward to a peaceful evening after a stormy day—to repose, and perhaps happiness at last.

‘You know how that hope left me—how my love and care were powerless to save my darling. He died in my arms, and soon shall follow him, as I did while he lived.’

She ceased speaking, and Honor too was silent. Her eyes were running over with tears of tender pity for the wasted life whose last hours she was tending—a life so noble waste in devotion to one who, even as drawn by the partial hand of affection, must have been selfish cruel, and mean beyond the power of words to tell.

How many men who could have appreciate

such a wife are, in their turn, united to heartless women!

And is it not well for humanity it should be so?

If all good people married those equally good, what an *inferno* the bad and selfish would make among themselves!

Honor's self-imposed task of kindness did not last long. Within a week from the recital of her story, Lady Julia Vaughan died.

The day before her death she put into Honor's hand a pocket-book containing several notes, and said to her—

'I have just received the quarterly instalment of the pension which has been paid me since my husband's death. I did not, some time ago, think I should live till to-day, so I laid by enough to pay my funeral expenses. Will you manage all that for me, and keep the remainder? You know I have no one else to give it to.'

When Honor had laid her at rest, and raised above the spot a simple monument, with the initials 'J. V.,' there remained to her of her friend's bequest enough to pay the rest of her

debt to Monsieur le Bœuf, with interest; so Conny's trousseau was paid for at last, and Honor breathed freely again.

Sir Edward Wrexhill and his bride did not forget Honor in their happiness. Edith wrote a long letter, telling her friend how, after their quiet wedding, they had set out for Italy, to remain there a year; but on their return to England they hoped they should see a great deal of Honor.

Her heart glowed with joy at Edith's long-delayed happiness. It was a strange contrast to stand, as she did that afternoon, beside the grave of that other loving wife, that poor weary wanderer, who had at length found peace 'where the wicked cease from troubling.'

CHAPTER XI.

‘POOR SPENCER BERTRAM.’

TWO troubled years had nearly passed since the Blakes left Bayonne, when Honor was surprised by a visit from Mrs. Bertram. The lady looked anxious and unhappy. She had, she said, found some trouble in tracing Honor’s present address—had only at last obtained it from Edith.

‘And I want to speak to you so particularly, Miss Blake, the delay has been very distressing.’

Honor signified attention; and her visitor took out a letter, but before opening it, asked—

‘Do you hear often from your sister?’

‘Very seldom. Conny was never a good correspondent.’

‘When did you hear last? Pray do not think me impertinent.’

‘Not at all,’ said Honor.—‘Mamma had a short letter from Conny about two months ago.’

‘And in that did she—she did not—in fact’—Mrs. Bertram hesitated, and then went on with an effort—‘This letter is from Mr. M‘Intyre, the head of that mercantile house in Brazil where my son is junior partner. He writes to me on the plea of old family friendship, to tell me that things are not going on with the young couple so well as we could wish.’

‘Indeed?’

‘Yes, Miss Blake; and if you will excuse me for speaking openly, I fear that much of it—I do not say all—is the fault of your sister’s inexperience. Only her youth and inexperience—I bring no graver charge against her; but you can understand that even those faults may go far to wreck the peace of a household.’

‘Of course they may.—Pray, Mrs. Bertram, tell me all about it.’

Honor spoke with a grave sense of terror at her heart. What had Conny done? Nothing in all the conduct of her early life gave her sister any assurance that it might not be something wrong.

‘ Here is the letter,’ said Mrs. Bertram ; but even when Honor held out her hand for it, she drew it back.

‘ I thought it best to speak to you frankly, Miss Blake. I hope you will write to your sister, and use your influence for her own and my son’s happiness.’

‘ I will certainly, Mrs. Bertram, but I must first know what has gone wrong.’

Once more the lady held out the letter, but ere she relinquished it she said—

‘ I must tell you that the writer of this, though a friend of our family, and I am sure a sincere well-wisher of my son’s, is a cold man, apt to be harsh in his judgment of Spencer. He does not always make allowances for the difference in age and tastes between himself and my son. You must remember that when reading this letter.’

The letter was not a long one.

It was, as Mrs. Bertram had implied, evidently written by a cold, sensible Scotchman, who called things by their real names. He told Mrs. Bertram that for some time past her son had been pursuing a course which, if not desisted from, must end in his ruin.

His expenses far exceeded his income, and he almost entirely neglected his business. Of late, too, the domestic dissensions between himself and his wife had become so bitter as to cause public scandal.

On one recent occasion Mrs. Spencer Bertram had left her own house, and presented herself in that of the writer, to claim protection, as she averred she would not remain longer with her husband.

Through the exertions of Mr. M'Intyre and his wife, a reconciliation had been patched up, but this event had convinced him it was his duty to write to Spencer's mother, as the influence of relations at home might have more effect than anything he could say. Of Conny he spoke in no admiring terms. He said she appeared to be 'an exceedingly silly young woman,' 'very extravagant,' and 'of a temper entirely unsuited to be the wife of a man like Spencer, who would try the patience of any woman;' at the same time he allowed that she was not chiefly to blame for the domestic quarrels, though, if she had had any sense, she would have avoided them.

Sad as this story was, Honor felt relieved. She had feared, from Mrs. Bertram's words, that Conny was accused of some indiscretion, of a nature more serious than any at which the letter pointed.

The accusation of simple 'folly' rather puzzled Honor. She knew that Conny was extremely selfish, and had little or no high principle, but she had always believed her clever and sensible enough, where material things only were concerned. Honor did not know how soon selfishness and self-indulgence degenerate into folly, in circumstances where wisdom would demand self-denial.

She did not dispute with Mrs. Bertram the point of who was most to blame, but spoke a few kindly words, to soothe, if possible, the mother's indignation against her son's wife, and promised to write at once to her sister, urging her to be more forbearing and more economical.

Mrs. Bertram said, that though it would cripple her own income excessively, she would, as soon as she could hear from Mr. M'Intyre that it was possible and wise, pay Spencer's

debts once more, so as to give him and his wife an opportunity of starting afresh.

Conny had always been so little communicative to her family, her last letter being only a request that her mother would send her a good pattern for some particular piece of finery she had seen described in the newspapers, that Honor little anticipated the burst of recrimination and complaints which formed the reply to her letter of remonstrances.

Conny said her husband was 'a brute,' Brazil 'a detestable hole,' Mr. M'Intyre 'a stingy old miser, who thought every woman ought to dress on as little money as his own dowdy wife.' 'If I had known what was before me, I never, *never* would have been married,' she said; 'you are very well off, Honor, that nobody ever asked you to marry. I am losing my beauty with this horrid climate, and constantly crying, and I have not a thing fit to wear. I wish, dear Honor, you would send me enough money to come home, and I would never leave you all again.'

Honor could not easily fulfil her promise to let Mrs. Bertram know the result of her appeal

to her sister. She wrote again, trying to make Conny see, that as she must spend her life with her husband, it was for her own interest that she should try to make him and herself happy ; and Honor, wisely deeming that a little kindness goes far to recommend advice to acceptance, enclosed in her letter a five-pound note she had destined for the renewal of her own much-worn wardrobe.

'I can turn my black dress again,' she said to herself, 'and make it last through the summer, I daresay. Something new to wear will put Conny in good temper.'

Before this second letter reached its destination, news sad and startling came from Brazil.

Spencer Bertram was dead !

A short illness had carried him off, and his wife was left entirely without provision.

Conny wrote that she was returning to England directly. Mr. M'Intyre generously paid her passage,—for all Spencer's property and effects would not defray half the debts he had left.

Conny bemoaned her fate in this respect much more volubly than the loss of her hus-

band, though she did speak of him with some show of feeling, and said Honor would be glad to know they had 'made friends' before his death.

She begged her sister to go to Mrs. Bertram at once, and bespeak from that lady, for her son's widow, assistance, if not a home.

Honor hoped she might succeed in her mission, for her mother's income, with all she could do to add to it, was ill suited to bear any addition to their household, much less to afford Conny all she would desire.

But her heart ached for Mrs. Bertram, and she forbore to trouble her immediately after the news which she knew must have been such a heavy blow. Some days later, however, she was surprised by receiving a note from one of Spencer's sisters, saying, that as her mother was not able to go out, and had something to say to Honor, she would be greatly obliged if Miss Blake could visit her.

Honor went, somewhat hopeful of good for Conny, but returned abashed and disappointed. The interview had been a very painful one.

Mrs. Bertram was half beside herself with grief.

She had asked Honor to come to her, in place of writing what she had to say, that she might show her some letters—the last 'poor Spencer' had ever written to his mother.

In them, with his wonted careless generosity, he had deprecated her blame of Conny, declared that much of their past disagreement, as well as their extravagance, had been his fault, and promised amendment in nearly the same words he had promised it a hundred times before—always with full intention of redeeming his pledge, which lasted till his next temptation.

Honor could not help shedding tears over these letters, they were so full of that sweet impulsiveness which had made poor Spencer so charming to those who loved him.

Above all things, he tried to find excuses for his wife, and assured his mother, if they could only leave Brazil and the mercantile business they both hated, and begin anew in more congenial circumstances, they would be very happy.

Poor Spencer! Always beginning anew!—always craving a more congenial career!

With his dying hand he had scratched a few lines to his mother, which Mr. M'Intyre had

forwarded, begging her to be kind to his wife, and bidding her farewell, with some piteous words of penitence for all the anxiety he had caused her.

Few people could have read this unmoved, still less could the generous girl who had once loved him so well, and been so cruelly wronged by him. She looked up from her tears, hopeful that Mrs. Bertram meant to send through her words of welcome to her widowed sister, and the sternness she read upon the ashen-grey face, looking at her with dry eyes that seemed too full of misery to be able to weep, startled her.

Mrs. Bertram held in her hand another letter.

‘You have read those,’ she said. ‘Now read this.’

It was from Conny,—a woful contrast to those from her poor husband. The date was nearly the same as that of her letter to Honor, written before her widowhood; but by some unlucky delay it had reached Spencer’s mother by the same post as that which brought the news of his death.

The purport was much the same as that of her

letter to her sister—a wordy, illogical, and bitter complaint against Spencer and the home to which he had brought her.

Foolish Conny! to think that any mother would ever take the part of her son's wife against her son!

'I wish you to tell your sister from me, Miss Blake,' said Mrs. Bertram, 'that I have received her letter, and such are the feelings I have towards the woman who could write as she has done of my boy, who too evidently embittered his last hours by her heartless conduct, probably shortened his life by it—for, as you see by his letters, he had a generous, sensitive heart,—that I hope, for her own sake and mine, she will never come into my presence or let me hear her name again. I would rather have a viper cross my path.'

Honor tried to say something about Spencer's last wishes, but his mother interrupted her:—

'No, no! that only hardens me against her. He could write so generously while she was slandering him to his mother!'

'That letter has been long on the way,' said Honor; 'the date is an old one. There seems

to have been a complete reconciliation before your son's death; and I am sure my sister grieves sincerely for his loss.'

'She may well do so; she will never meet any one like him again.—Do not talk to me further, Miss Blake. My mind is unalterably made up: I will never forgive her!—never!'

Before Honor left the house she sought Miss Bertram, and to her pleaded her sister's cause, revealing to her without concealment the poverty of her mother's home, and how much Conny needed the aid of her husband's relations.

Miss Bertram gave her no hope that anything would soften her mother.

'You do not know how she loved Spencer,' she said, 'nor how determined she is. When she makes up her mind like this she never changes.'

The following week Conny arrived, looking so pale and worn as to excite her sister's compassion. It wrung Honor's kind heart to have to tell of her unsuccessful visit to Twickenham. She softened the truth as much as she could, till Conny declared her intention of visiting her mother-in-law; and then Honor told her all.

As of old, when anything went wrong, Conny said she was sure it was all Honor’s fault : Honor had mismanaged the affair.

She then wrote to Mrs. Bertram, and when she received no reply to her letter, she went herself, against her sister’s advice, to Twickenham, to see her husband’s family.

She returned home in a state of hysterical excitement, and was really ill for some days after. Honor never asked what had happened during her visit, and Conny told nothing more than that Mrs. Bertram had *insulted* her.

‘ And yet I told her in my last letter Spencer and I had made friends before he died. Poor Spencer ! he never wished me to be treated so cruelly, I am sure.’

‘ I am sure he did not, Conny. It is a pity Mrs. Bertram will not think more of his last wishes. His letters about you were very generous ; he took all the blame of your quarrel upon himself.’

Conny began to cry.

‘ Of course it was his fault, Honor—that is, I daresay I was impatient, but I ask you if any woman *could* have borne with him. There

was a Portuguese widow there, a Dona Maria Antigua; such a horrid little thing, with a bad complexion! She was a kind of half-caste. Well, Spencer was infatuated with this odious creature. She had a fine voice, and they used to sing together. You know I cannot sing, and I could not understand Portuguese either, so I used to be left to sit by myself till I got angry, and then Spencer called me "jealous" and "censorious." He said it was all "Platonic attachment."

'And did you not believe him?'

'I suppose he was right; but I did not much care what sort of attachment it was. As for the fact, he could not deny that he gave her money—gave her money, Honor, when I had not a bonnet fit to put on my head! And when I said that, he told me I had none but imaginary wants, and ought not to grudge a fellow-creature help for those that were real.'

'Was she very poor?'

'I believe she was. When first we knew her, her husband was alive,—a drunken, gambling spendthrift. Those were the days when she used to sing with Spencer. Then he died,

and she and her children were left with very little money; but I am sure we had none to spare them. Spencer pitied her so much, I used to tell him I supposed he would like me to die too, that he might marry her.'

'O Conny, Conny! how could you say that? —What became of her?'

'She went away somewhere to her own family with the money Spencer gave her. It was after that he and I made friends.'

'I am so thankful you did make friends, Conny. It is a happy memory for you.'

'Yes, it is; for though I used to be so angry with him sometimes, I could not help being sorry when I lost him,' and Conny cried a little again. 'He said on his deathbed he was so sorry for all our quarrels, and hoped I would forget them. And he sent his love to *you*, Honor, and asked you to forgive him; I do not know *why*, except for his treatment of me.'

Honor turned her head away, that Conny might not see the tears which fell over the grave of that buried love and sorrow.

'It is well for you,' Conny went on, 'that no-

body ever asked you to marry, Honor. It is regular slavery! I do not suppose any one ever will ask you now. How old are you? Let me see—three-and-twenty, and I am twenty-one, only twenty-one. Heigh-ho! I feel as if I were forty, and look it too in this hideous cap. I suppose it was some jealous man invented widows' caps, in the same way that they burn the widows in India. I wonder how long I need wear it? Honor, just look at my face in the light, will you, and tell me if you see any wrinkles coming round my eyes. I was sure I saw one to-day, but the glass in my room is so bad. Could not we get into larger lodgings, in a better street?'

Honor, after examination, reassured Conny about the wrinkle, but explained to her that it was impossible to think of more expensive lodgings.

Well for them if they could keep these, now that all help from Mrs. Bertram was out of the question. Honor set herself, more diligently than before, to earn enough to eke out their income.

At last she was so fortunate as to obtain the

place of French teacher in a school, besides her private pupils. The work was far from being so pleasant, or so well paid as that at Bayonne, but she never murmured. There were grumblers enough at home without her.

Mrs. Blake and Conny kept up a constant chorus of complaints and repinings, the former for the misfortune of having her daughter, who she believed had married so well, 'returned on her hands,' and for what she persisted in calling 'Phil's undutiful neglect,'—the latter for being forced to live in such a poor home, and having no society, and no new clothes.

Newton, who really had something to complain of, as London air suited his health very badly, was naturally dispirited by the companionship of his mother and younger sister, and added his discontent to theirs.

Honor would not allow her mother to write to Phil for money if she could help it. She consistently declared that the support of Charlie was quite enough to lay on his elder brother, till such time as Phil began to be richer than he now seemed to be ; and her influence with Mrs. Blake had grown so largely in proportion

as she became more and more useful, that she carried her point.

Once, when Conny had been about a year at home, things became very gloomy.

Newton had been ill again. There was a heavy doctor's bill to pay, and the family exchequer was almost empty.

Then Honor thought she must ask Lady Tracy for help—Lady Tracy, from whom she had not heard for so long; her last letter, telling of Emmy's death, never having been answered.

They had changed their dwelling twice since then, and she sometimes thought it possible Lady Tracy might have written and the letter been lost; so at last she determined to go herself to Westbourne Terrace, and see whether her old friend had returned.

No; the house was let to its present occupants for another year, the servants told her; they did not know Lady Tracy's address, and said their mistress was ill, and could not be disturbed by questions.

Honor weathered that storm by a sacrifice that cost her much—the sale of a watch Tom

Tracy had given her in Paris, when he was only 'Cousin Tom.'

During her vigils by Lady Tracy's bed, the watch of the latter and the clock on the mantel shelf both being out of order, she had one night asked Mr. Tracy to lend her his watch, to time the hours for the invalid's medicine. The next day he had bought her this very pretty watch and chain.

During their first London poverty, and the pressure of the debt to Monsieur le Bœuf, she had sold the chain; but until now, she could not bring herself to part with the watch.

At length, however, she was forced to it.

This was her last possession of any value.

She went up to her room after she had done it, and took from her drawer a slightly worn, but carefully preserved book. It was that copy of Longfellow's Poems, which was nearly the first present she could remember receiving.

She opened it at the 'Psalm of Life,' and read it.

Then she wrapped up the book almost tenderly, and went out to give her afternoon's round of French lessons.

CHAPTER XII.

TRY AGAIN.



AMONG the pupils at the school where Honor gave French lessons, there was a young lady named Miss Kate Gray, who attached herself to her French teacher with that impulsive affection warm-hearted girls often feel for those some years older than themselves.

Honor was in her turn attracted by Kate Gray : she was so different from any of those among whom her ties of friendship had previously lain.

Lady Tracy belonged to a past generation, and Lady Julia Vaughan, bowed down by a life of sorrow, seemed scarcely much younger—a strain of sadness had ever mingled with Edith's sweetness—Sister Justine's was a life apart from the every-day world,—and in Louise

le Bœuf, the typical Frenchwoman of her class, there was little in common with this fresh, high-spirited, country-bred English girl, whom, no doubt, Madame le Bœuf would have deemed more proud of her prowess in horsemanship, skating, and other *manly* sports, than became a maiden of seventeen years.

Kate soon claimed friendship with Miss Blake, and gave as her pledge a full and faithful confidential history of her past life.

Her father had a small property in a midland county, where he and her mother lived, with five sisters and brothers younger than Kate.

There was an elder sister married, and two elder brothers—one at sea, such a darling!—Miss Blake must see him!—and the eldest son had just taken Orders.

This young man was, at the present moment, doing curate's duty in London, but the vicar of the parish where his father lived was going away to another living, and the bishop had promised 'George' the vacancy.

It would be delightful to have him near them, said his sister.

She called on Honor for full sympathy in this last opinion, when chance made Miss Blake acquainted with brother George.

The assistant resident teacher in the school became ill, and had to go home rather suddenly, but as there was a prospect of her return to her duties after the coming holidays, the principal, Miss Chillingham, did not like to fill her place permanently.

At the same time, she required some assistance, and she was very glad when she found Miss Blake able and willing to give it to her.

Honor was of course delighted at anything that increased the comforts of her family by adding to her earnings ; and though she never, to the end of her scholastic experiences, found English people in general regard ' teachers ' as French society does, Kate Gray and her family were exceptions, and the young girl's friendship made this time a very happy one.

Kate was not exactly what in *these* days would be called *fast*.

She did not ape the bearing or the dress of women from whom, if her grandmother had knowingly met them, *she* would have turned

away her face that she might not see them ; though she did go out hunting sometimes, it was in a habit for which her father, who accompanied her, had no cause to blush ; the few words of slang she had picked up from her brothers were decent, if not elegant ; and her behaviour to the other sex, if more free in outward semblance than her mother's was when she was a girl, was not really less modest.

At the same time, the leaven of the age had not left her character quite untouched, and the result was, that Kate Gray got into what she called a 'scrape,' by lending herself as the vehicle of communication between her sailor brother and a young school-fellow, not so particular about her conduct as was Kate herself.

Honor helped Kate out of this trouble by her intercessions with the schoolmistress, and, above all, by the advice, which the culprit followed, of frank and full confession as the best path. This incident strengthened Kate's regard for her friend, and drew towards Honor the attention of Mr. George Gray, who was then preparing the elder classes of Miss Chillingham's school for Confirmation. It was part of

Honor's new duties to ~~escort~~ the young ladies to these lessons.

Mr. Gray often walked a little way with his sister afterward and was introduced to her governess. When the summer vacation came, and Kate Gray was to leave school altogether, she conveyed to Honor a kind invitation from her mother to spend a fortnight in their country home. At first Honor hesitated. The expense of the journey was not great, but even that money would be useful at home, and her private tuitions would be neglected for that time, and so cause further loss.

She was only induced to accept Mrs. Gray's invitation by the fact she could not conceal from herself, that sorrow, hard work, and poor fare, were at last undermining her health. The warning symptoms were not to be mistaken. It might be that if she did not heed them, her illness would before long deprive her family of all her earnings, and it was wise to take a holiday now, if by so doing she could prolong her work.

Neither her mother nor Conny saw her need of rest, but Newton did, when she told him

what she felt, and he good-naturedly offered to give up some comforts of his own for the time, to furnish his sister with means for a change. .

‘Thank you, dear Newton,’ said Honor ; ‘but I shall not require that. This is the extra sum I have had from Miss Chillingham since Miss Groves left, and half of it will be enough for me. Kate Gray won’t mind my old clothes, so I need not get anything new for my visit. The other half of the money will more than make up for all I shall lose by not giving lessons for a fortnight, now that Miss Chillingham’s school is closed.’

‘I am sure, if I were you,’ said Conny, ‘I would rather stay at home all my life long than go to pay a visit such a figure as you are. Your bonnet looks as if it had come out of the ark, Honor!’

Honor went to Hartshurst notwithstanding, and the absence of a new bonnet did not materially detract from her enjoyment there. The atmosphere of that warm, cheerful, lively, family circle gladdened her heart, as the scented summer air of garden and hayfield brought fresh health to her frame.

It was Honor's first experience of that sweetest place on earth, a real English country home. Their own home at Anglet had been very happy once, but it had always lacked the completeness of that at Hartshurst.

There was the cheery father, still scarcely past his prime; the comely, busy mother, who, by force of the love and trust each member reposed in her, knit the whole together into one; the young matron sister on a visit, with the clever barrister her husband, and that spoiled pet of the house, her blue-eyed baby girl. George Gray, with his calm clerical air and thoroughly *English* mind, so sedate and matter-of-fact that his more lively sailor brother and merry Kate often laughed at him; and then every grade of budding maidenhood, hoydenish girlhood, and dirty-fingered schoolboydom, down to the little ones, who shared with their niece the jurisdiction, fond, though stern-worded, of the nurse, who, like several of the other servants, had lived with Mrs. Gray since her marriage.

Honor remembered having looked with Lady Tracy at a print from a picture, called 'Another Man's Garden,' and how her old friend had

told her of the feelings, akin to envy, with which she, a wanderer, on that first visit to England, after many years of absence, of which she had told Honor, had sat by the fireside of a happy home, knowing that her own home in a far distant land lay deserted, and would never echo to her children's voices again.

Even so poor Honor looked upon that family group at Hartshurst, with such sad hopeless longing that peace such as they enjoyed might some day come into her troubled life. But though Honor felt this at times, her mind was too healthy not to be thankful for the share given her in their happiness, though only for a time, for the oasis that thus lay in the middle of her desert path. It astonished herself to find that sorrow had not entirely quenched her youth and her power of youthful enjoyment.

As a proof of the above, I may record that Honor, at the end of the first week, had become such an expert croquet-player, that she and Mr. George Gray, who was not considered a very good player, defeated, in three successive games, the usually invincible Kate and her brother-in-law.

The vicarage lay not quite a mile from Hartshurst House, and competed with it, Honor thought, for the palm of sweetness.

It was an old-fashioned, heavy-gabled dwelling, beside a still older church. A hedge of rose-trees alone separated the blooming garden and smooth green lawn of the vicarage from the neatly-kept 'God's acre,' with its cypresses and simple village monuments.

Here Honor, with Kate and her brothers, went to take tea a few days after her arrival at Hartshurst, and she carried away its memory, as that of a most delightful home. And it might have been hers. The evening before she left Hartshurst George Gray asked her to be his wife, to take up her future abode with him in that rose-covered vicarage, as one of that loving Hartshurst circle.

'I know,' he said, 'you have long been the "breadwinner" of your family, and you must not let any fears for them weigh with you now. We should not be rich, but we should have enough to enable us to help your mother, till your Australian brother has made a competence. You see Kate has told me all about you. If

necessary, I should take some pupils for this end.'

It was not that fear which had left Honor silent—not that,—but a struggle with the hardest temptation she had ever encountered. It was as though some mocking fiend, in angel guise, had opened the door of Paradise, and bid her enter, if she would leave her truth behind.

But Honor knew that the Eden so gained would be no Paradise to her, and she resolutely turned away her face to the thorny desert again.

She knew that in spite of her esteem for George Gray, their union would want, must ever on her side want, that subtle attraction which makes *love*. She knew that between her own impulsive imaginative nature and the decorous commonplace of his mind there lay a gulf, across which it might come to pass she would look upon her husband as intellectually her inferior. No sophistry of the tempter, no sudden remembrances of Sister Justine's preaching on the vanity of the love that preceded marriage, or of Madame le Bœuf's wedded happiness, could blind her eyes to this truth ;

and besides this, Honor knew, in her heart of hearts, that there was another, whom she might never see again; one who had probably forgotten her long ago, but that, if he and George Gray stood before her now, she would choose that other. And so she said 'No' to the young clergyman, and the next day bade adieu, with sad heart, to Hartshurst and its inmates, and went back to sultry, dusty London, lying foul and gasping in that same July sun which was wooing into life and fragrance the blossoms on the porch of Hartshurst vicarage.

Honor's head was aching, and she was not in very good temper, when she reached home. It annoyed her to find a visitor with Conny in their small sitting-room. Newton and his mother were out, the servant said. The intruder was a man of about forty years of age, distinguished by a width of girth which might have made any disciple of Mr. Banting shudder, dressed in the very newest and sleekest of raiment, with a wonderful neck-tie, in which he wore a blazing diamond pin, while a corresponding stone flashed on his huge coarse hand. He sat on the very edge of his chair, which,

Honor thought, looked about to collapse under his weight, holding his hat on his outspread knees, and fanning and mopping his very red face with a bandana handkerchief, in the intervals of which amusement he frequently delivered himself of puffs like those of an asthmatic steam-engine, expressive of his sense of the heat of the weather.

‘It beats Melbourne! It does!’ he ejaculated, as Honor entered. ‘Phew!’—and, seeing the young lady, he rose up, and made her an elaborate bow, which nearly overthrew his own chair and Honor’s gravity.

Where had Conny found such an extraordinary acquaintance? Conny advanced to meet her sister, and introduced the gentleman: ‘Mr. Goodenough—a friend of Phil’s, Honor. He has brought us a letter of introduction from Phil.’

Honor forgot her fatigue and the stranger’s odd appearance in her anxiety to hear about her brothers from one who had seen them lately.

Mr. Goodenough said both were well, and doing well again now, in spite of the losses Phil had had with his sheep. He called them

'ship,' and otherwise misused the Queen's English in a manner I cannot attempt to reproduce.

'Phil had better have come to the diggings with me,' he said, 'though perhaps what he is doing is surer, if it is slower; it is not every man finds £20,000 before breakfast?'

He put this in the form of a question, nodding and winking to his auditors, and fumbling in the tail-pocket of his coat as he did so.

He produced from this receptacle a plethoric pocket-book, which he opened, slowly and deliberately, first setting his hat on the ground and placing his bandana on his knees to receive the contents. He drew out and unfolded a piece of newspaper, which he handed to Conny, saying—

'See there! Mr. John Goodenough!—that's me!'

This paper contained a pictorial representation of a huge gold nugget, and an account of how it had been found by 'Mr. John Goodenough, of Melbourne,'—'already distinguished,' said the writer, 'for his success in the gold-fields.'

Honor really did not know what to say, but

Conny saved her the trouble of speaking, by some prettily-turned congratulations, at which Mr. Goodenough's face grew radiant all over, and he applied to his pocket-book again, and took out a piece of rough gold of the size of a filbert.

'See that!' he said. Conny admired it. 'If you made a hole in it, it would look nice round your neck, now,' he went on, in an insinuating tone, and rising, he held it up in his rough red paw against Conny's slender throat. Conny coloured, and drew back, but put out her hand and took the nugget all the same.

Honor interposed, with a warning glance at Conny, 'My sister cannot think of taking such a valuable thing, thank you.'

'Now don't you be jealous, Miss,' said the gold-digger; 'it is the last one I have, or you should have one too.'

Just then the maid-servant entered with a small parcel.

'For Mrs. Bertram, ma'am; a boy left it.'

Conny took it from her, and the girl left the room.

Mr. Goodenough was staring wildly about him, with a look of great anxiety on his face.

‘Eh! What! What did she call *her*?’ he asked of Honor, pointing at Conny with his thumb.

‘My sister’s name is Mrs. Bertram,’ said Honor.

‘Oh, I say!’ continued the visitor, ‘if I didn’t think she was a *Miss*. Where’s her husband?’

‘I am a widow,’ said Conny.

‘No; you’re joking,’ he went on. ‘Why don’t you wear a cap if you are?’

Conny began to grow angry. Even the possession of nuggets could not excuse such rudeness.

‘Because, sir, in the society I am accustomed to, it is not usual for young ladies to wear widow’s mourning indefinitely,’ said she with great dignity, and walked away to the window, leaving the nugget on the table.

Mr. Goodenough looked piteously at Honor.

‘I have offended her,’ he said. ‘I had better go; good-bye, Missus; I didn’t mean any offence; you will keep the nugget though, won’t you?’ and he disappeared.

‘What a bear!’ said Conny; but she took up the nugget, and looked at it lovingly.

‘I wish Phil had gone to the diggings,’ she went on.

‘What! to live among companions like Mr. Goodenough?’ said Honor.

‘That is all nonsense. I daresay he knows plenty of people far worse. Here is what he says, in his letter to mamma, of Mr. Good-enough,—“He is an honest fellow, though you may think him a little rough.” Anyhow, Honor, you really must write to Phil to send us some money. It is quite dreadful to be so poor. I went out this morning to buy those boots,’ pointing to the parcel, ‘and I saw so many pretty things in the windows I want dreadfully, but I hadn’t money for anything except the boots, and I was forced to buy those. If you will not write to Phil for money, I will. I will not bear this any longer;’ and she began to cry.

The door, which had not been closely shut, opened suddenly, and Mr. Goodenough’s large red face appeared, which so startled Honor that she had to sit down, repressing an inclination to hysterical laughter.

‘Now don’t ’ee!’ he said, advancing to the table. ‘Don’t ’ee, missus! Don’t cry, nor

don't ask Phil for money. He can't spare it to you now, and I can.'

He had taken out the stout pocket-book, and from it selecting several notes laid them before Conny.

'There's fifty pound, and there's more for you whenever you like. John Goodenough is not the man to let an old chum's sister want.'

'It is very kind of you, but we really cannot take your money—' Honor began.

'Now don't 'ee!' said Mr. Goodenough. 'It is not for you; it is for the pretty one. She will take it.—Good-bye,' and he rushed away before Conny had time to thank him.

Honor in vain remonstrated with her sister about the impropriety of keeping Mr. Goodenough's present, but Conny was obstinate, and Mrs. Blake upheld her younger daughter's resolve.

'What could fifty pounds signify to a man so rich as Mr. Goodenough?' she said.

'It may not signify to him, but it does to us,' replied Honor; but as she was powerless, she forbore to hurt Newton's pride by telling him of the affair, and he was left in ignorance

of the source whence came the luxuries Conny generously enough dispensed to the family from her store.

‘Honor,’ said Conny, a fortnight after the above occurrence, during which time the gold-digger had been a pretty constant visitor, ‘Mr. Goodenough has asked me to marry him.’

‘How dreadful!’ cried Honor. ‘O Conny, why did you take his money?’

‘I do not see that it is dreadful at all. I wish you would let me finish speaking before you interrupt me. I have accepted him.’

‘Conny, Conny! you are not in earnest!’

‘Why not? I married a handsome, refined man once for love, and what good did it do me? Mr. Goodenough is not handsome or refined, but at least he is rich, and *that* is something tangible; also he is very good-natured, and very fond of me. I daresay *you* would not be happy with him, Honor, but I think *I* shall.’

Honor was silent from dismay.

‘I cannot bear to be poor any longer,’ went on Conny, ‘and in Australia Mr. Goodenough’s rough manners will not signify. Nobody will mind it there, when he has a nice wife, and is so rich.’

Then Honor found voice, and entreated Conny to give up this terrible project. Her sister was immoveable.

‘You are very ungrateful to Mr. Goodenough,’ she said, ‘for he is going to be extremely generous to you all. He wants you all to come out to Australia with us. He has given me *carte blanche* for your outfits with my own. Only one bargain I want to make with you, Honor : you must promise not to attempt to give lessons out there. I choose the people there to think *I* am a lady, and they will not, if my sister is a governess.’

To this part of the plan Honor would not agree.

She would probably have accepted from Mr. Goodenough her passage to Australia and a modest outfit rather than be separated from all her family, but she would not consent to give up her independence, and live henceforth upon his bounty.

Mrs. Blake was delighted with the idea of accompanying her rich daughter, and seeing Phil and Charlie again ; while Newton, who always declared he would never be well in England, eagerly seized the prospect of the

change. Only he grieved sincerely at the thought of parting from Honor, and often urged her to accompany them.

Mr. Goodenough joined his persuasions, adding to them the promise of 'finding her a husband in six months.'

But Honor was obstinate, and said that she would remain in England, supporting herself by her own exertions.

Conny and her mother were too busy now to be much troubled by her resolve. One of the immediate results of Conny's engagement was the removal of the whole family, at Mr. Goodenough's expense, to a large hotel at the West End, from whence the bride-elect and her mother made daily pilgrimages to milliners' and outfitters' shops, and filled their rooms with the fruits of their selections.

Honor removed to the hotel with them, unwilling to part from Newton till the last, and making herself very useful by packing for the whole party; but she engaged for herself for the future a small lodging in the neighbourhood of her tuitions, and as soon as the holidays were over, she went daily as usual to attend on her pupils, causing much terror to Conny lest

the servants of the hotel might divine the cause of her sister's absences.


These people, as she might have guessed, knew and cared so little about the strangers who passed and repassed through that colossal establishment, that all recollection of the Blake family was entirely obliterated a fortnight after the excitement caused by Conny's gorgeous wedding; and it happened, a month or so later, that friends who there sought some clue to Honor's new abode, sought it in vain.

Honor would accept no money from her future brother-in-law, but to please Conny she suffered herself to be suitably arrayed at his expense for the wedding.

'You must be my bridesmaid this time, Honor,' said her sister. 'It was not my fault you were not last time. It was poor Spencer would not hear of it. I wonder why; for in general he never contradicted me in those days. But he seemed quite savage when I proposed it, and I am sure there is nothing in you to make any one dislike you, though you are ugly, poor old Honor!'

CHAPTER XIII.

ALONE.

ONNY's wedding was as magnificent as it could be without the element of a party of distinguished guests.

That element Conny was, perhaps, more willing to forego, as the bridegroom was not a person of whose speech or appearance the most loving spouse could be very proud.

They were married in St. George's Church, Hanover Square, and after the ceremony the happy pair proceeded to Brighton for a week, during which Honor enjoyed a farewell time of quiet with Newton.

Then Conny and her husband returned to London, the last finishing touches were put to her momentous business of packing. Those precious colossal cases, whose contents were destined to fill the Australian female world

with envy and admiration, were safely shipped, and the travellers followed.

Honor parted with more kindly feeling than she had once believed possible, from her rough, generous brother-in-law, who promised her to take good care of her mother and brother—and kept his word ; her mother and Conny kissed her affectionately, with some dim, late sense of all her goodness ; Newton was deeply affected ; and Honor, with swelled eyes, and a sad lonely weight at her heart, returned to their hotel for her boxes, and drove to the small house, a room in which was to be henceforth her solitary home.

Her pride of independence was nearly all gone that evening, when she sat down in the comfortless lodgings she had now no object in making cheerful. With only herself to enjoy it, she seemed to have no heart to do more than furnish her life with necessities.

And this was to be her future existence ! she thought. To live only to support her own weary life ! Better perhaps have given up her pride, and gone to Australia with poor Newton.

Some weeks passed, during which Honor pursued her solitary round of daily lessons and evening loneliness in a manner almost mechanical.

She sometimes wondered what it was made her so heavy and listless—why she could not enjoy a holiday in Kensington Museum, or even a new book, as of old.

Was it altogether because she was alone—or was it because her head ached so very often—because her long neglected and outraged *physique* was about to have its revenge?

At last there came a day when Honor, with throbbing head and fevered hands, could scarcely see to write a few lines to Miss Chillingham, and the parents of her other pupils, begging them to excuse her present attendance on plea of illness.

These notes she begged the girl who waited on her to post. She forgot to add any address to them.

Most of her pupils were quite indifferent as to the sickness or health of their French mistress, but Miss Chillingham would have gone to ask after Honor, had she known where to

go. She knew this much, that Miss Blake's sister had just married an exceedingly rich man, and that the whole family had lately been living in luxury at an hotel, so she could not believe the sick teacher wanted for friends or money.

And Honor lay alone through weary weeks of fever, struggling between life and death, with none to care how the strife ended.

The people of the house where she now lived were of a calibre much lower than that of Mrs. Spiggins.

They saw in Honor only the representative of her weekly rent, and felt it an injury and a grievance that she should have given them the trouble of her illness.

The first thing that happened when Honor came back to life was, that her landlady presented her bill.

Honor gave her all the money she had, and promised the remainder as soon as she could go out. She did this to get rid of the noisy vulgar woman, without much clear idea of how she could obtain it.

This was on a Friday, and surely, she said

to herself, next week, or the one after that, she might resume her tuitions.

It was strange she felt still so languid, for the apothecary who had attended her during her fever had said she was cured, and only wanted nourishing food.

She had no appetite, however, and that might be as well, as she must not run up tradesmen's bills till she could go to her pupils again.

On Saturday she walked to Miss Chillingham's.

She was very faint and weak, and was obliged to stop to rest several times before she reached the house.

Miss Chillingham was away from home, and Miss Groves, who received Honor, told her, not unkindly, that during her illness another French teacher had been engaged.

She said she did not believe Miss Chillingham would wish to change again, but that lady would be at home on Monday, and if Honor would leave her address she would write to her.

Her tuitions could not recommence for a month, certainly, as the new teacher had

been engaged for a fixed term. Meantime, at Honor's request, Miss Groves paid her the small sum due to her for previous lessons. There was nothing more for her to receive, as at the two houses where she gave private lessons all had been paid just before her illness.

Honor went home more slowly than she had come, and on entering the house encountered her landlady with a request for her money.

'I have not got it all yet, Mrs. James; will you wait for another hour?' said Honor.

She went up-stairs, took out the silk dress she had worn at Conny's wedding, and went with her bundle to a shop which advertised the purchase of such things.

That was a terrible ordeal for a sensitive, nervous lady, who had never before come in contact with this lowest form of genteel poverty. She sold her dress, and returned home with the money in her pocket, all mentally bruised and shaken by that rough contact with coarse and vulgar natures.

As she passed through the street where poor 'Mrs. Blackwall' had lived, she saw Mr. Tracy.

He was in a hansom cab, talking to the driver, and referring to a memorandum-book in his hand, as though seeking some house he could not find.

Honor leaned against a lamp-post and watched him.

The driver of the cab got down, and after examining the numbers on the doors, made some inquiry at that house, so well known to Honor, where she had attended Lady Julia Vaughan's deathbed. The man returned to Mr. Tracy, said something to him, and the cab drove away.

A policeman told Honor to 'move on.'

Mrs. James opened the door for her, evidently in an expectant mood, and Honor put her hand into her pocket.

Her purse was gone ! It had probably been stolen while she was watching Mr. Tracy.

The poor girl nearly fainted at this discovery, and even her rough landlady was touched.

'I would not trouble you, Miss,' she said ; 'only I paid the doctor, and you had things while you were ill for which I paid.'

'Will you take this bonnet, and this lace

shawl, and these other small things in payment?' asked Honor, descending to her landlady's room, some minutes later, with her hands full of all her remaining bridesmaid's finery.

'I should have paid you in money, Mrs. James, but that my purse was stolen. Will you take these instead? The shawl cost more than what I owe you, and has only been worn once.'

Mrs. James, with her family, was going out for a holiday the next day, and the shawl, which, she reflected, she could sell afterward, recommended itself to her use on that occasion, as did the bonnet to the taste of her pretty daughter.

They were trying on the things in an undecided way, when Mr. James entered, and at his daughter's request gave verdict in favour of the finery.

Mrs. James presented her lodger with a receipt in full, and Honor toiled wearily upstairs, and sat down in her desolate room.

Presently a knock at the door disturbed her. It was Mrs. James's servant-girl.

'Please, ma'am,' she said, 'to-morrow is my

Sunday out, and master and missus is going to Greenwich. I will fill your kettle, and make up the kitchen fire; and can I bring anything in for you?’

Honor thought for a moment. She was entirely without food—entirely without money. She might have sold some of her clothes or books to support her during the next few days, but she had no strength or courage to venture out again.

‘No, thank you, Mary Jane,’ she said; and the girl went away believing Miss Blake meant to spend the next day out herself, for she soon brought in a latch-key, which she laid on Honor’s mantel-shelf, lest, she said, the young lady should return home first.

Honor sat at her window for a long time that night, till the last light in the houses opposite was extinguished, the last straggling passenger gone home.

There was a terrible feeling of loneliness in her heart, which even the sight of human life near her relieved. At length she lay down and slept a heavy sleep, from which she awakened to hear the church-bells ringing.

All the other dwellers in the house were gone out, and as she lay there the events of yesterday came back to her mind with startling distinctness.

She was alone in London, without money, without friends, without employment, or strength to go out to seek for any.

Those two tuitions, which she might probably, if able, resume at once, would not do more than pay for her lodging; and, even to gain that, how was she to go out to teach, day after day, until the money became due, without food? No; the end had come at last: the end of her busy, loving life, the end of her troubles too.

Had she done wrong in not going with Newton to Australia? Perhaps she had, but God would forgive her now, she thought.

She got up, took her Prayer-Book, and tried to follow the service then being read in so many churches round her; but her eyes were dim, and she could not see the words clearly.

Most of the Litany she knew by heart, and that she repeated fervently, adding many a petition of her own. Then she thought of Sister

Justine, dear Sister Justine, in her far-away convent. One of those homes Honor might have had to shelter her now, but she had missed them all, and was to die alone here.

How the autumn foliage must be gilding the woods about Hartshurst now!

She did not *regret* having refused that home, although a great pang rent her heart as she thought of it.

‘I must have died one day all the same,’ she said, ‘and now I am thankful I was kept from the sin of marrying George Gray.’

With penitence for all her sins of temper, all her omissions of duty, Honor reviewed her past life; thinking tenderly of each friend in turn, and bidding each a mental farewell.

Then she began to grow weary, and the sense of loneliness she had felt yesterday came over her again.

The October afternoon sun was shining brightly aslant the pavement, and Honor thought she would go out,—go to church if she could. She finished dressing herself very slowly, took her latch-key, and went into the street. It was full of people going to a neighbouring church,

and Honor went along with the crowd, till she suddenly found herself grow very sick and faint, and she caught hold of a railing to save herself from falling. Some respectable-looking people passing by stopped to ask her if she were ill.

Their voices brought the blood of the Blakes back to Honor's face. She thanked them, said she felt slightly faint, but needed no help; her house was near, and she would go home. She wore a thick veil, so they did not see how ill she looked, and went their way.

Honor turned to go home, but found she could not walk so far. She had to take refuge in an archway which on week-days was busy with workmen going and coming, but now was deserted. Here she sat down, and remained till the evening began to grow grey.

Then a great dread of dying thus in the streets came over her, and gave her strength to get up and make her way home.

It was like reaching some blessed resting-place to find herself in her own room once more. She had only strength enough left to take off her bonnet and shawl, and fall on her bed.

How she got through that night she never knew. It was very very long, full of bodily pain and mental terrors.

Busy Monday morning dawned on the city, and found her lying, still dressed, where she had thrown herself the evening before.

Mrs. James and her family had been out till a late hour, and were late in proportion that morning. There was a good deal to be done in their household, and no one was in very good humour to do it, so it easily came to pass that their lodger was forgotten. If she wanted anything she would ask for it, they thought.

The weather had changed in the night. The day was cold and wintry, and the rain beat in torrents against Honor's window. She got up shivering to wrap her shawl round her, but could not stand.

How long would this last ? she thought.

What a slow death this cruel one seemed to be ! She thought last night it would have been all over now !

How she hoped this day would be the last !

She had paid Mrs. James for her lodging till to-morrow morning, and she would fain feel

that, even in so small a matter, she would be indebted to no one.

She counted the strokes from a neighbouring steeple.

Eleven, was it? or ten? She could not count. There was a strange buzzing noise in the room, which seemed to last a long time. All of a sudden it grew louder, like people talking by her door, inside the door! What was it?

Was this a vision, or—

Visions do not catch people in their arms and cry, 'How we have searched for you, my child!'

It was Lady Tracy.

Some hours later Lady Tracy's carriage stopped at her own door in Westbourne Terrace, and from it Mr. Tracy's strong arms carried a bundle of shawls, with a pale wasted face in their midst, up the staircase to a room his care had seen prepared, while his mother had superintended the removal of the sick girl.

Lady Tracy to this hour blames herself for neglect of Honor, and shudders to think how nearly she came at the last too late.

But she was not altogether to blame, not at all perhaps, excepting that for the first time in

the lives of the mother and son, she had used concealment towards Mr. Tracy as to the Blakes' removal from Bayonne. The mother hoped that her son would forget the only girl he had ever wished to marry, as that girl did not return his affection ; and Mr. Tracy, seeing how it pained his mother to talk of Honor, had forbore such talk.

He had not known that Honor was in London all these years. He too had not been there all the time. He had been absent a great deal on professional business, in a distant part of the country.

When at last he knew that the Blakes were in London he had sought them without success. Lady Tracy too had written twice to the last address Honor had given her, with no reply.

A coincidence of unfortunate changes in the family to whom that house belonged caused her letters to be mislaid, and all trace of Honor's address to be lost.

Lady Tracy had spent all this time abroad, first for health, afterwards for a reason I shall relate further on, and had only now returned to England. She had met Sir Edward and Lady

Wrexhill just before her return, and heard from them that Honor had written of Conny's coming marriage. To the address given in that letter Lady Tracy went, but only to be referred to the large hotel, where all clue to the Blakes had vanished.

At one time Lady Tracy was inclined to believe Honor had seen the *folly* of her ways, and gone with her fortunate sister to Australia. Mr. Tracy refused to believe this, and followed up old clues till he found Miss Chillingham.

From her he had ascertained that Honor had not gone to Australia—that she was ill somewhere in that part of London, but Miss Chillingham could not say exactly where.

On that dismal Saturday afternoon he had been seeking her ; and as soon as Miss Chillingham, on her return home, heard from Miss Groves that Miss Blake had been there and left her address, she sent it to Westbourne Terrace, and Lady Tracy had come in time.


The doctor assured her that Honor's recovery was only a work of care and time. In a few weeks she would be about again, and Lady Tracy thanked God with tears.

‘ She must never leave us again, mother, till she marries,’ said Mr. Tracy. ‘ And when she is stronger you must find out all about *that*, and try to set it right.’

Lady Tracy kissed her son in that silent freemasonry with which hearts generous as theirs interpret each other’s unspoken thoughts.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HAVEN.

LOWLY, very slowly, Honor's strength came back; slower still was the return of her former energy.

Nature, long overtaken, claimed a time of reaction, and Lady Tracy insisted upon obedience.

Honor found that it was laid upon her to do nothing except rest, and that rest was so delicious she did not oppose the edict.

Day after day she lay, in warm, luxurious idleness, in that cosy back drawing-room, where gay hothouse flowers simulated summer beside her, and cunningly-devised delicacies tempted her weak appetite.

There Lady Tracy sat by her side, weaving the knitting, which her injured arm, still too stiff

for much writing, accomplished easily, and which had become one of her favourite occupations—and Mr. Tracy read aloud to them, or they talked such delightful talks as few people know how to enjoy.

‘Your mother looks quite cheerful again,’ said Honor to Mr. Tracy, one day; ‘she is not altogether the same as when I first knew her, but she has recovered more than I used to think she ever would.’

‘Yes she has,’ he said; ‘there has been a great improvement in her during the last year;’ and then he went on to tell Honor how, in the dire need of the erst mutinous northern provinces of India, when terrible famine was devastating the country so lately watered by innocent blood, all resentment had passed from Lady Tracy’s mind, and merged into pity, with its fruit of active help.

I need not tell the story of *the Indian Englishmen’s revenge* here.

Is it not written in dry official letters and Government reports, in ‘operations of relief committees,’ and among statistics of famines—written in those matter-of-fact business-like

words, in which Englishmen are wont to record great and good deeds, which other nations would relate with more dramatic effect !

If in 1857 the shades of Roman heroes might have watched approvingly the high endurance of men and women nurtured on those traditions that have made Western Europe great—then might the spirits of Christian martyrs, who with their last breath prayed for their murderers, have looked on the same scenes in 1860, and smiled to see their example not forgotten.

Mr. Tracy told Honor how largely his mother had sent of her means to famine-stricken India; how she had relet her house and lived abroad for another year, to spare more for this purpose; and how at one time she had actually offered to go there herself, to help in the good work.

‘The person who told me that,’ said Tom, ‘said he had not the least doubt she would have been most useful; but I am so thankful he would not let her go.’

‘It would have killed her,’ said Honor.

‘Of course it would, and she knew it; that is why she proposed it without telling me.’

Tom Tracy and Honor took up their friendship nearly where they had left it off.

That old love, proffered and refused, brought little embarrassment to either, as it seemed.

Honor soon found it need cause none at all.

As a general rule Lady Tracy did not receive visitors in that back drawing-room where she tended her invalid, but now and then she made an exception.

One dull November afternoon Honor was dozing on her sofa, while Lady Tracy talked with an old friend.

Their talk ran on subjects uninteresting to Honor, and she almost slept.

She awoke to hear the visitor's voice say—

‘I was glad to hear he is going to be married.’

‘I am very glad of it,’ replied Lady Tracy; ‘he has been a dear kind son to me, and he deserves to be happy.’

Honor thought this conversation was not intended for her ears, and she buried her head in the green *couvre pied* of Lady Tracy's workmanship which covered her sofa.

It seems quite impossible that Lady Tracy

and her maid could have let the invalid wrap anything damp round her, but I do not know how otherwise to account for the fact that one of Honor's cuffs and her pillow were found stained with green that evening.

So Mr. Tom Tracy was going to be married.

How very glad she was !

As soon as she was well, she would ask Lady Tracy to procure for her a situation in some family as governess.

Ten days after this Lady Tracy's maid entered the back drawing-room carrying a pretty baby's robe and cap, which, after examination by her mistress, she proceeded to pack in a box.

'These are for Isabel's new baby, whom I have not seen,' said Lady Tracy ; 'I want to take them to her and sit with her for a while ; do you think you can get on for a whole afternoon without me, Honor ? Tom will read to you.'

Honor expressed herself quite ready to be left, and deprecated the occupation of Mr. Tracy's time, as she declared she was almost well, and quite able to read to herself. How-

ever, this was negatived, and Lady Tracy drove away, leaving the cousins together.

A volume of Longfellow's Poems lay on the table by Honor's couch.

Mr. Tracy took it up, and read some of Honor's favourites, ending with the 'Psalm of Life.'

'I never read that,' said Honor, 'without thinking of when I read it first—the day after I first saw your mother. You were so kind as to send me the book.'

'I remember,' said Tom. 'I have your note still.'

'My note!' cried Honor, laughing. 'It must be a strange production. I do not write a very clear hand now, but I wonder you could read it at all then. I suppose you kept it as an evidence of the barbarity of the sister island?'

Both laughed, but Mr. Tracy's laugh ended in something like a sigh.

Honor thought he must be wearying to get away, probably to see the future Mrs. Tracy. She wondered when *she* would see her, and what she was like. However, if this were the case, Mr. Tracy was very self-denying, for he quite refused to go away, and read aloud for

more than an hour, till he was interrupted by the delivery to Honor of a letter the postman had just brought.

‘From France,’ she said; ‘from Sister Justine. What is this?’

There fell out several enclosures, official-looking papers, which Mr. Tracy picked up.

‘The confession of Jean Detrop,’ he translated.—‘What is all this? Forgery! Monsieur Charles Blake wrongfully accused! Hurrah! Charlie is cleared at last. See how it all came about.’

Tears of thankfulness were clouding Honor’s vision, and she could not see the lines before her. She held up Sister Justine’s letter to Mr. Tracy, and, leaning over her, he read it with her.

It was an old story.

Jean Detrop, seized with mortal sickness, had revealed to the Sister of Charity by his bed the crime which weighed sorest upon his guilty soul—how he had found Lady Tracy’s key, dropped by her in the garden at Anglet; how he had opened the desk, and stolen and forged the cheque, leaving the key in the lock; and how he had procured the money through his grand-

mother as for one of the English family, and hidden it in the ground.

He had attended the trial boldly, seeing no one suspected him, but had not meant to give evidence against Charlie. Circumstances had, he believed, compelled him to do so to screen himself; but Honor's face, as he saw it when she gave her evidence, had haunted him ever since.

He had, soon after the Blakes left Bayonne, gone with his ill-gotten money to Paris, and there prospered as little as he deserved. In extreme destitution, and very ill, he had at length returned to Bayonne, to seek the help of his grandmother, whom he had deserted.

The old woman was dead.

Jean declared that she did not know of his crime, but honestly believed at the time the money was for the English household. Whether at a later period she suspected her grandson, and whether her demeanour in the court of justice was assumed to conceal his fault, remains unknown.

Sister Justine lost no time in calling a notary to the bedside of the dying penitent, and taking the legal steps necessary to clear Charlie's name.

'And I have cleared your name also,' she

wrote. 'My tongue is no longer tied, and I have leave to make public the sisterly devotion which brought upon you such a gross slander, and how false that slander was. There is but one feeling among all who knew you at Bayonne. They desire that you should come back here, to let them prove how much they esteem you. I saw Madame le Bœuf yesterday. She says she and her husband will never forgive themselves for having doubted you. Monsieur le Comte de Trouvaille says he always knew you were innocent.'

'What is this about?' cried Tom, and he would not be denied an answer.

At last Honor had to stammer forth in broken words—

'Only—because—they thought it was I, not Charlie, who went in the train with you. You know how particular French people are.'

'Good heaven!' cried Tom; 'and you bore that, Honor! and—' he began to walk up and down the room very hurriedly, then stopped opposite her and said—

'Forgive me, but I must ask: it was through this that the attachment, the engagement, you told me of four years ago was broken off? At

least my mother believes it has been broken off.'

'Oh no, no!' cried Honor; 'I mean it all ended long ago, but not for that! Before I returned from Paris he had changed his mind, and fallen in love with Conny.'

'Was that the man she married? I beg your pardon—I have reopened a painful memory'—for her tears flowed, though for another cause than he deemed.

'Not at all,' she said, when she could command her voice; 'I have no memory at all connected with it,—with him, except that I believe I was very silly. He and Conny were not happy together, and I do not think I ever really loved him.'

Mr. Tracy was leaning over her again, and gently drew her hand away from her face.

'Honor, dear Honor! if this be so, will you take back the answer you gave me then? If you have still a heart to give, will you not grant it to my true and patient love?'

'Oh, Tom,' she said, 'I have known how silly I was, ever since almost, but'—and she looked up in his face—'now it is too late to talk of it.'

‘What do you mean, Honor?’

‘I heard your mother tell Mrs. Claude you are engaged to be married.’

‘Impossible! You misunderstood her! I have never in all my life wished to marry any woman except you, Honor, and never will.’

Honor repeated what Lady Tracy had said.

‘She was talking of John Langston, my poor sister Annie’s husband,’ said Tom; ‘he is going to take a second wife.—And now you have cross-questioned me, I am going to examine you in turn. The evening Mrs. Claude was here my mother told me you had been crying, and asked me what was the matter with you?’

To this question Honor vouchsafed no reply, and I am not sure that Mr. Tracy wanted one.

When Lady Tracy returned in the closing dusk, she called out—

‘How are you, Honor? I hope Tom has been taking care of you? Why have you no candles?’

‘Because we are very happy without,’ said her son; ‘Tom has been taking care of himself, mother. He has got a wife for himself at last, and a dear daughter for you!’

With a cry of joy Lady Tracy was by Honor's side.

'How I have prayed for this!' she said; and as she sat, holding a hand of each, they told her all that had happened.

What have I more to say?

The Australian party were gladdened on their arrival in their new home by the letters sent overland telling them of Charlie's vindication.

They all liked Australia.

The voyage did Newton good, and neither he nor his mother ever regretted having left England.

Conny is happier in her second marriage than she was in her first.

Mr. Goodenough cannot make too much of his beautiful wife, who is still considered the belle of the colony, and he is never tired of spending money on her, and giving it to her relations.

Phil prospers, and has laid the foundation of a new house of Blake, in a new Kildaggan, wealthier, and we will hope wiser, than the old.

Charlie came to England some years since to see his sister.

That lesson at Bayonne has lasted his life-

time. He has grown up an honourable, truthful man.

He entered the merchant navy, and now commands a ship belonging to his wealthy brother-in-law, in which, thanks to that relative's generosity, he has a share.

Honor is rich in friends now, but not one of those she loved in the old days is forgotten.

Lady Tracy is a living refutation of all slanders on mothers-in-law.

Her son's wife is the light of her eyes, and Honor feels she never knew a real mother's love before.

But on the other hand, Lady Tracy, I must confess, vindicates her womanhood by being an entirely traditional grandmother. She spoils Tom's children to that extent!—

That urchin Blake has just upset my ink-bottle, and brought my tale to an abrupt close!

I know his grandmother won't let him be whipped for it.

LONDON, *June*, 1872.

A

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